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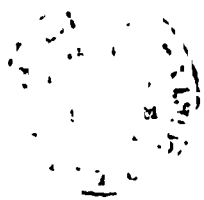
EXCURSIONS IN THE ABRUZZI.

VOL. II.



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SOLMONA,

EXCURSIONS

IN

THE ABRUZZI

AND

NORTHERN PROVINCES OF NAPLES.

BY THE HON. KEPPEL CRAVEN,

AUTHOR OF

"A TOUR THROUGH SOUTHERN NAPLES."

83824

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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EXCURSIONS

IN

THE ABRUZZI.

CHAPTER IX.

Improved Road.—Castrum Novum.—Giulia Nuova.—Rice plantations.—Chieti.—Relics of the ancient city.—Country houses.—Villa of the Cantelmo family.—Pentima, the ancient Corfinium.—Church of S. Pelino.—Rajano.—Aqueducts.—S. Venanzio.—Solmona.—Range of the Majella.—Ovid's Birthplace.—Abbey of S. Pietro Celestino.—Monument of the Cantelmo family.—Stanze d' Ovidio.—Historical notices of Solmona.—Excursion to the source of the Sagittario.—Romantic defile.—Lake of Scanno.

I QUITTED Teramo, after a residence of one day and a half, without even visiting the theatre, the organization of which is reported to be so indifferent as to add but little to the stock of amusement enjoyed by the inhabitants, which is in itself so limited as to have obtained for the town the reputation of being the dullest in the whole kingdom.

I had been recommended to return by the line of road which was forming to complete the communication between Teramo and Giulia Nuova; and accordingly, instead of jolting again along the bed of the Tordino, I crossed with much caution, and some difficulty, the ravine which marked the spot where I had left it on my previous journey, and kept the track which runs from thence in the direction of the sea. This is parallel with the course of the stream; and being not only traced, but already supplied with the materials used for road-making, our progress was in most respects less tedious than that of the preceding journey, though frequently interrupted by the gullies which stretch from the line of hills to the Tordino. These, however, it was always possible to cross without peril, at the cost of a little attention and some trouble; and we thus saved at least two hours, and fell into the road which runs along the coast, at about half a mile south of Giulia Nuova, between that town and the river, whose wide bed we had to cross again to resume our direction towards Pescara.

The country between Teramo and Giulia

Nuova is not remarkable for beauty or peculiarity of feature; but it is carefully cultivated, and well-furnished with farm-houses and even villas. Some brick ruins of considerable magnitude show themselves among the olive-grounds, probably belonging to the town of Castrum Novum, which with Interamnia and Beregra formed the principal cities of the Prætutii.

Castrum Novum is mentioned by Pliny and others; and is placed, in the Antonine and Peutingerian itineraries, on the Via Salaria near the Batinus, now Tordino, twelve miles distant from the Tronto, formerly Truentum.

This measurement agrees exactly with the existing distance between the former river and the frontiers of the kingdom of Naples, designated by the Tronto.

In the middle ages, Castrum Novum changed its name to San Flaviano, from the body of a saint so called, brought thither from Byzantium. The unhealthiness of the spot had contributed so greatly to the depopulation of the town, that one of its feudal possessors, Giulio Antonio Acquaviva, Duke of Atri, laid the foundations of another residence in a more salubrious,

though contiguous situation, and removed the remaining inhabitants thither about the middle of the fifteenth century, where it has increased in numbers and prosperity under the name, from that of its founder, of Giulia Nuova.

The surrounding territory has, since that period, been frequently exposed to the ravages of a feverish and unhealthy atmosphere, said to originate in the establishment of rice plantations, which in all hot countries are accounted most prejudicial in their effects.

These have been alternately suppressed and reinstated, according to the fluctuations of influence possessed by the different proprietors; but at present none are in existence, and it is to be hoped their restoration will never again be allowed.

I slept another night at Pescara; and, having retraced my way along the river as far as the stone obelisk which points out the road leading to Chieti, we followed its zigzag and very wearisome course for the space of three miles along the sides of an olive-grown bank, till we reached the gate of the city, placed on the very crest or saddle of the hill: the situation of which is

salubrious, and commands an extensive prospect of the surrounding country, but is far from commodious, or even agreeable, in other respects.

We found a good but very crowded inn, much attention from its inmates, and excellent fare; but the heat of the weather, and the state of bodily suffering under which I began to labour, prevented my remaining as long as I intended, or even availing myself of the letters I had brought with me for some of the principal families and the Intendente. These drawbacks may possibly have imparted an unfavourable colouring to the impression made by the town of Chieti, which I nevertheless must record as I felt it.

The city contains about ten thousand inhabitants, and is placed longitudinally on the narrow crest of a range of hills that runs in a south-east direction from that of Morrone towards the sea.

Its form is modified upon the space it occupies, which is narrow and elongated; the streets are in general contracted and tortuous, and in many parts dark and dirty, though provided

with well-built houses and shops, which in size and splendour approach nearer to those of the metropolis than any other belonging to provincial towns.

It has a large cathedral, which offers nothing remarkable except an extensive collection of Latin inscriptions found in the vicinity, and fixed on the surface of one of the walls of the edifice: a mode of uniting and preserving such records of antiquity, which ought to be more generally followed in all countries where they abound.

It possesses a good theatre, with a respectable operatic corps, whose performance of the rehearsal of the Donna del Lago during a whole summer's night contributed not a little to effectually banish such intervals of sleep as the heat of the earlier part of the evening, and the tumultuous gaiety of the working classes, might have spared. In this last respect, Chieti vies with, or perhaps exceeds, the clamour of the narrow lanes of the capital, where the security from any interruption of carriages allows such artisans as carry on their labours during

the nocturnal hours to indulge in all the noisy mirth which seems an indispensable appendage to such occupations.

It offered in this particular a remarkable contrast to the wider but deserted streets of Aquila, where, after nightfall, even in the brightest moonlight, not a voice is heard, or a human form visible.

I need not add, that an appearance of ease, cheerfulness, and activity, is the natural accompaniment of these habits of industry, which may nevertheless be attributed to the effects of climate rather than to those of education.

The fertility of the surrounding territory, improved by assiduous cultivation, provides the city with abundant supplies of every necessary and even luxury of life, added to regular importations of river and sea fish.

Among the natives who have distinguished their name by abilities and talents, the Abbate Galiani stands pre-eminent, who not only obtained a merited degree of celebrity in his own country, but was unanimously admitted in the first ranks of that class of beaux esprits who

more peculiarly illustrated the last twenty years of the ancient monarchical regime of France; that is, from 1769 to the Revolution.

Chieti is the seat of an archbishop, and as such has conferred its name on the religious order of the *Theatines*, from Teate, its ancient classical denomination; this community having been founded at the instigation and through the indefatigable exertions of its archbishop, Gian Pietro Carafa, better known afterwards as Paul IV, one of the most imperious and restless pontiffs that ever filled the papal throne.

Theate, or Teate, at a more remote æra, was considered the capital of the small but not unimportant tribe of the Marruccini, who sought the alliance of the Roman republic in its early successes, and remained its useful and faithful allies until the Social War, when they took part with all the other nations on this shore of the Adriatic, and shared their downfall.

Among the relics of the ancient city, the most remarkable are the vestiges of a theatre of considerable dimensions, those of a large public edifice, some remains of a temple of

Hercules, and one of Diana Trivia; a few arches, a gateway, and a fine pavement of mosaic, found in the year 1640, representing the contest of Hercules and Achelous, and described as one of the most perfect specimens of that species of labour ever discovered. To these must be added numerous inscriptions, some of which allude to the principal families of the town, and more especially to the Vezian and Asinian tribes; the last of which produced Asinius Pollio, one of the most remarkable characters that distinguished the age of Augustus.

The native antiquaries of Chieti have endeavoured to dignify it by a Greek origin; founding their hypothesis on an error in some of the editions of Strabo, in which it is called Tegeate, and considering this appellation as bestowed upon it by a colony from the Arcadian Tegea. It is, however, more probable that it was (like most others located in these regions) a Samnite or Oscan population; and, in addition to the many objections which naturally present themselves to the former assertion, it is to be remarked that no monu-

ment of any kind has ever been found within the present range of the provinces of Abruzzo bearing an inscription or letters in the Greek dialect.

The fragments of antiquity above mentioned, it is almost needless to add, are all of Roman style and execution.

Chieti, after the invasion of Italy by the Lombards, was comprised in the principality of Benevento, and governed by Castaldi, or Counts, of which the chronicles of the kingdom have preserved a list. In later times it was occasionally granted in fief to influential families, or made the reward of military services; but it was never subjected to that species of jurisdiction for any extended period, and has long since been restored to its own government, subject only to the prerogatives of the royal power.

The air of this city is esteemed pure and healthy; but its elevated position, and proximity to the high range of Majella, subject it to great varieties of temperature, exemplified by violent heat, sudden and tempestuous winds, and frequent fogs in the autumn and winter.

The view on all sides, which is very extensive, is extolled as remarkable for its beauty and amenity; but, except to the south-east, scarcely deserves this encomium. On this side, the sea, though not nearer the eye than from the opposite flank of the mountain, appears much more distinctly, and the intervening ground is diversified by numberless hillocks, wooded valleys, or contracted glens, not scantily enlivened with substantial villages and country-houses, many of which last bespeak greater affluence and a more refined taste than the generality of such edifices exhibit. The environs of Chieti are thickly studded with similar buildings, which are as remarkable for their architecture, as they appear deficient, to a foreigner, in what constitutes the most valuable appendage to such residences, namely, a garden.

These, belonging mostly to the more opulent class of inhabitants of the adjoining towns, are not unfrequently constructed at a considerable expense, displaying some taste in design and execution, a convenient interior distribution, and are sufficiently ornamented and well-fur-

nished to form commodious abodes; but I scarcely can remember one having a garden attached to it, though the surrounding territory is probably extensive, and in every respect well adapted to such a luxury.

It is not uncommon to drive up to these habitations through a handsome architectural gateway, between pilasters, and a short extension of front wall on either side, ending abruptly, and therefore quite useless for the purpose of enclosure: but the intermediate space of ground leading to the mansion is generally a barren waste, unprovided even with such humble embellishments as the usual mode of cultivating the native farms might supply. For it is customary wherever a house is built for the purpose of a villa, or what is most improperly called a *delizia,* to clear the surrounding soil of every tree or vegetable production which nature may have kindly provided, and which are never replaced by more refined or ornamental substitutes.

This is the more remarkable, as the immediate skirts, and frequently the interior of large provincial towns, exhibit gardens laid out in

an antiquated but not inelegant style, attached to many of the larger houses.

One of these, belonging to a Baron Nolli, at the very gates of Chieti, exemplifies this observation in a very striking and even splendid manner. A good carriage-road runs along each longitudinal flank of the town, between the bordering houses and the edge of the steep precipices that surround it. These form agreeable, though somewhat limited drives for the inhabitants, who are enabled to select either, according to the season, the time of day, or the direction of the sun and wind.

I quitted this town the day after I had arrived at it, and reaching Popoli, along the road already described, I passed a second evening and night there, though there was ample space of time to reach Solmona the same day; but the wish of deviating from the direct road to this last town, to see some objects in the vicinity, induced me to make this halt, to secure more leisure for the morrow's journey.

No drive can be pleasanter than that from Popoli to Solmona: an excellent and perfectly level road, running nearly in the centre of a

well-cultivated valley, bordered by high and fantastic ridges of mountains, much variety in the landscape, and several other details of interest and local beauty, amply make up for the formality of a perfectly straight line of eight miles' duration from north to south.

The first objects worth notice present themselves to the traveller's observation within a mile from Popoli, in the shape of the ruins of a small villa, once belonging to the Cantelmo family, who had constructed it as a place of summer relaxation, near their baronial residence, already mentioned as existing at Popoli. The spot is somewhat elevated above the level of the high-road which runs close to it, and thereby commands a view of the whole extent of the vale, with the city of Solmona at its farthest extremity.

What remains of the building shows it to have been fabricated in a style of superior elegance; and the remains derive a picturesque character from the wild luxuriance of a deserted pleasure-ground, still retaining the name of *Il Giardino*, which it originally possessed. But the peculiar and principal attractions of the

spot arise from the abundance of water which flows round, and indeed under, the fragments of its fallen magnificence. A copious spring, of singular transparency and coldness, rises from a nook in the small rocky amphitheatre which backs the villa; and, after forming a lake or pool, is divided into many branches, distributed in the happiest manner through various parts of the edifice and the surrounding territory.

These assume different shapes, and maintain the neglected vegetation in a state of freshness which adds considerably to the general effect. A broad marble fountain, in the shape of a large conch, overflowing in a silver cataract, has resisted the workings of time and neglect, and finishes the picture in the most characteristic manner. It is surrounded by several fragments of antique sculpture, and some inscriptions found in the vicinity, with which the taste of the day was wont to decorate rural retreats.

A thicket of oak, of circumscribed extent but luxuriant growth, overhangs the cleft in which these abundant rills originate: a numerous breed of wood-pigeons inhabit its recesses;

and their peculiar note, mingled with the louder rushings of the waters, and the monotonous whirl of a mill-wheel recently erected within the precincts of this little domain by its present possessor, add that kind of animation most suited to a scene which wears the aspect of solitude rather than desolation, and is not without considerable attractions.

Leaving this, we continued our way towards Solmona; but quitted the direct road, about three miles farther, to follow one branching off to the right, which crosses the river Gizio previous to its junction with the Aterno, and leads in a diagonal line across the valley to the village of Pentima, through which it runs, and to that of Rajano, situated about two miles beyond it, nearer the lateral ridge of mountains.

Pratola, which almost deserves the name of a town from its population of three thousand three hundred inhabitants, appears on rather a higher level to the left, in a pleasant position.

Pentima contains about fifteen hundred souls, and Rajano about the same number. The former is situated on a fine level surface of ground, somewhat elevated above the plain,

which extends as far as the second; and deserves notice as the site of Corfinium, the principal city of the Peligni, rendered still more famous in the Social War as the spot fixed upon for the reunion of the forces furnished by the allied nations who resisted the Roman arms in that memorable contest. It was likewise designated as the seat of the confederation which directed the military operations, and held supreme command over all the combined armies. It was well adapted to this purpose, from its capacious dimensions and its strong fortifications; and still greater dignity was conferred upon it, by becoming the bulwark of the allied populations, and receiving the senate, composed of five hundred individuals chosen from among the different tribes who had united against the republic, and had deposited within its precincts an enormous treasure in specie, and abundant stores of all sorts. So confident were the allied forces of their success in resisting the Roman army, that they conferred on this city the name of Italia, (which still exists on some of its coins,) in anticipation of the rank it was likely to obtain from its defence and resistance:

all which splendid precautions proved however fruitless.

The situation, at no great distance from the Aterno, is very fine, and not unsuited to a city which was considered deserving the honours thus bestowed upon it; but the existing remains of its former consequence are few, and composed of very indifferent materials. They consist of some shapeless masses of buildings, constructed of very small stones, strongly cemented together, and shaped into the semblance of large blocks.

There are also some faint vestiges of walls, and of an arch. These ruins are scattered round a church, (a portion of which is of good Norman architecture,) dedicated to San Pelino, as the cathedral of a city called Valva, which, in the dark ages, succeeded to the Christian Corfinium, and to the privileges of a diocese, subsequently transferred to Solmona.

In the interior of this edifice are some ancient tombs, among which is seen that of St. Alexander, who stands fifth in the number of pontiffs after St. Peter.

Rajano is pleasantly situated among the sinu-

osities of numberless clear streams, the produce of two aqueducts, both of ancient construction, but in exactly opposite directions to each other. One brings the waters of the Sagittario, which I shall have to describe hereafter; and the other, which conveys those of the Aterno, is infinitely a finer work, being excavated for a space of three miles in the flank of the rocky mountain that rises above that river. Its course can be traced the whole of that way, first, in an uncovered channel hewn in the stone, and afterwards by the apertures which have been cut at periodical distances, and afford the means of turning off the water, and cleansing the passage, which is of considerable depth. Both these were executed by the inhabitants of Corfinium, to supply their city, which stands too high above the bed of the Aterno to derive any advantage from its stream.

The last of these is now called Canale di S. Venanzio, from a small church and hermitage, placed on an arch over the river in its narrowest part, where it rushes from a gorge in the hills to the broad expanse of the valley.

This saint was a standard-bearer, and his

legend has sanctified this wild retreat as that where he performed a painful and protracted penance; the little church being filled with *ex-votos* in painting and sculpture, commemorating the numberless miracles which he still is in the habit of performing.

One of these, but one week before my visit, had illustrated the feast annually held in honour of his name; when a child having fallen out of its mother's arms, over the parapet on the arch, into the stream, it was carried about fifty yards down the current, and taken out, not only without injury, but without being wet; which, as my guide sagaciously observed, proved the needful interference of the sainted protector in the most indisputable manner; and the painting, or daub, representing this memorable event, was already suspended at S. Venanzio's shrine.

Besides the aqueduct, the spot offers something remarkable in its wild situation, the precipitous and fantastic shape of the rocks that overhang it on all sides, and the variety and luxuriance of the plants and flowers with which nature has bountifully clothed it. Among

these, I was surprised to find the daphne, lentisk, and cistus, usually the produce of a milder climate; and much struck by a beautiful species of althea growing to a great height, and a pale flesh-coloured pink of singular fragrance.

The situation of the ancient Superæquum, the third city of the Peligni, has been recognized at Castel Vecchio Subequo, placed on the hills, at no great distance from the river.

From Rajano, the road which led us to it is continued over a bare and very steep mountain, by the pass called Forca Caruso, and afterwards, by Coll' Armeno, to the Fucine Lake, Celano, and Avezzano; a journey which, though tedious and rugged, may be performed in a carriage.

We retraced our course the way we had come, as far as the high-road, which brought us to the town of Solmona, where we took up our abode in a vast dilapidated building, occupying a large portion of a suppressed monastery, once belonging to the Jesuits, and now the only inn the city can boast of; as filthy and unpromising a residence as can be imagined.

The modern Solmona, or Sulmona, which stands very nearly on the site of the ancient, of

which only very faint traces can be perceived, contains at the present day about ten thousand inhabitants. It was once much more populous; but the earthquake of 1706, which destroyed great part of it, impressed the remainder with marks of devastation and ruin which it has never recovered. The streets are straight, and in general furnished with substantial stone houses, the exterior fronts of which have been left in an unfinished state, which greatly injures their general appearance; the stones of which they are constructed having never been smoothed at their exterior surface, or covered with any kind of stucco; though the doors, windows, and angles are almost all faced with a finer-grained material, carved and ornamented with considerable taste and skill. The contrast afforded by this circumstance is more particularly observable in the Gothic portals of the churches, of which a considerable number exist.

The most remarkable specimen of architecture is the town-house, formerly an hospital belonging to an adjoining church and ecclesiastical establishment called L'Annunziata. The

front has three large doorways, with a corresponding window over each: every one of these is adorned with a frame-work of most beautiful carved stone, all different from each other; and a frieze of the same rich and intricate character runs along the whole edifice, and gives it a most dignified aspect.

The principal street is divided from a very large unpaved square, on a much lower level, by the aqueduct which supplies the city from the river Gizio, and was built in the year 1400.

The square itself, though very spacious, is surrounded by mean and newly erected houses; but it has a fine antique fountain in its centre, composed of two distinct pateras, or basins of marble, one above another. The effect of this monument, seen through the arches of the aqueduct, is extremely picturesque; and is much enhanced by the addition of an immense Gothic porch of a ruined church, and a portion of its ornamented front, of such exquisite labour and florid tracery as to speak most favourably for the remainder of the structure, one of the many overthrown by the earthquake.

The cathedral, which is situated out of the town, and by which we had passed in our way from Aquila and Popoli, is dedicated to a Greek saint, Pamfilo: it offers nothing remarkable except a stone image of the Virgin and Child, of somewhat grotesque design, but curious in the intricate finishing of the drapery and ornaments, and likewise from having been painted and gilt.

The bishop's palace was once attached to this church; but, having been destroyed by the earthquake, it has been replaced by a large modern edifice, just facing it, the exterior appearance of which assimilates it to an extensive manufactory or magazine.

The natives of Solmona are not deficient in industry; having some paper-mills, tanneries, and several establishments for dyeing: but the most celebrated of its productions, though undoubtedly the least useful, are the sugar-plums and comfits, (*confetti,*) which, though much fallen in the public estimation, are still pre-eminent in the kingdom.

We found the heat suddenly, and most unpleasantly, increased on the evening of our arri-

val at Solmona; a circumstance of not unusual occurrence, according to the inhabitants, who complain much, not only of these abrupt transitions, but of the severity of the winters. The barren and stony surface of the Morrone, which is scarcely a mile distant, to the east of the town, reflects the sun in the summer, as it does the snow in the opposite season, and is probably one of the causes of these extremes in the temperature.

This ridge runs along the whole valley, dividing it from Abruzzo Citra; but a village called Pacentro, about four miles to the south-east, is placed on a kind of buttress, forming part of the still higher and more extensive range known by the name of Majella, and considered one of the most elevated districts of the kingdom:* it runs from this spot in a south-east diagonal direction towards the sea; but its roots sink in the plain before they reach the Adriatic. Its higher peaks retain the snow during the whole year: it contains some

* The Majella has never been accurately measured, but is supposed to reach an altitude of eight thousand feet above the Adriatic.

populous villages, fine pastures in the upper valleys, and is particularly noted for the variety and qualities of the medicinal herbs found only within its limits, which afford a livelihood to a number of individuals who are occupied during the whole summer with the labours of collecting them.

Pacentro stands at the entrance of a defile through which the ancient road, never practicable for a carriage, led to Palena, a town which I shall have occasion to mention at a later stage of my journey. This path is still used by pedestrians and mules; but not at all seasons, as it runs through two of those mountain passes not unaptly designated by the word *Forca*. These passes, from their peculiar position, are subject to terrific gusts of wind, which, in the winter, not only render all progress through them a matter of difficulty, but, when accompanied with snow, threaten rapid destruction to the solitary traveller.

A spot, a little way beyond this village, now bearing the name of Campo di Giove, is supposed to point out the site of a temple of

Jupiter Palenius, mentioned in the Peutingerian itinerary as one of the stations between Corfinium and Alfidena.

Solmona, in the early part of the Roman æra, was a principal city of the Peligni, yielding in size and importance to Corfinium only, and placed in the same valley at no great distance from it. Its name has become famous as the birth-place of Ovid, who has frequently referred to the coldness of its climate, which did not, however, abate from the fertility of its soil, and has likewise recorded the abundance and freshness of its streams, characteristics which it possesses to the present day:

> Sulmo mihi patria,
> Gelidis uberrimus undis, &c.

A statue of most wretched execution, evidently a production of the middle ages, and clad, like that of Horace at Venosa, in a clerical habit, is placed over one of the church-doors, with this poet's name inscribed under it.

The immediate vicinity of Solmona offers but one object worthy of notice, in one of those overgrown edifices which the wealthy ostentation of monastic institutions, rather than their

devotion, raised in honour of their founder. This is the abbey (now suppressed as a religious community) of S. Pietro Celestino, the hierarchal title of a remarkable individual, who, at the age of seventy-nine, was, in the year 1294, torn almost forcibly from the humble cell of an anchorite, and forced upon the papal throne, which he voluntarily abdicated after the short space of only five months, to linger out two more years of his existence in a state of honourable but strict captivity, misnamed retirement. Peter, a native of Isernia, surnamed of Morrone, dwelt in an hermitage still extant on the lower flank of the mountain, about three miles from Solmona; and it is just below this spot, and to commemorate those virtues which obtained for him a place in the catalogue of saints, that the order which was founded under the name he assumed as supreme pontiff (that of Celestinus) established one of the largest monasteries, not only in this kingdom, but perhaps in all Europe.

The community had existed ever since his time, and spread itself into other countries;

but this convent was its cradle, and, having received considerable damage from repeated earthquakes, it was rebuilt, by the voluntary contributions of the various branches subject to the same rule in all parts of the Catholic world, in a style of magnificence which must have raised it nearly to the level of Monte Cassino itself. It is situated at the foot of the Morrone, not more than two miles distant from the city, with a good carriage-road leading to it.

The French government suppressed it, and for a long while it remained totally unoccupied; but an experiment has recently been attempted to render it of some public utility, by placing within its precincts a small portion of the juvenile paupers who inhabit the Seraglio, or Casa di Poveri, in the capital, and instruct them in the humbler mechanical professions. The appearance of the boys spoke unfavourably of either the air or diet of the institution; but in other respects it appeared well managed, though on so restricted a proportion as to form a singular contrast to the dimensions of their abode.

The architecture bears the character of solidity rather than that of elegance: the court, an inner cloister, double corridors ranging round the principal quadrangle, magazines, refectories, dormitories, stables, cellars, kitchens, in fine, all the necessary and supernumerary appendages of an overgrown community, being laid out on a scale which can only be justly qualified by the term gigantic.

The ornamental marbles, as well as the paintings which adorned the church, have not been removed. Among the former are four remarkable columns of verd antique, which the taste of the year 1718 (the epoch of the restoration of the building,) has barbarously disfigured by giving them a twisted or spiral form. Among the paintings the only very fine work is one by Mengs.

But a monument, which in my humble opinion is far more attractive than either of the forementioned, is the sepulchre raised by a female of the Cantelmo family to her husband and her two sons.

Placed in a dark vault, or niche, in a portion of the ancient church, it is scarcely to be dis-

cerned at all, and requires candle or torch-light to be examined in detail: this scarcely allows justice to be done to the exquisite beauty of the heads and the natural simplicity of the figures, which, like most of those appertaining to the sepulchral monuments of the fourteenth century, are represented in the recumbent attitude appropriated to either sleep or death.

I was much struck by the similarity of style exhibited in this sculpture to that described in the church of S. Bernardino at Aquila; and the information that they were both by the same artist did not therefore surprise me.

A rapid stream, the produce of some neighbouring springs, runs just in front of the monastery; and some stagnant pools, which they likewise form, may probably taint the atmosphere with some degree of insalubrity; especially as the building, though so near the mountain, is to all appearance lower than the rest of the valley to the west, and is deprived from that cause, added to the proximity of the Morrone, of a free circulation of air.

M. Temaux, well known as one of the most enterprising and enlightened manufacturers in

France, has obtained from the Neapolitan government the sanction to form an establishment for the fabrication of woollen cloths in an unoccupied portion of the convent; and, when I visited it in June 1830, an inspector had very recently examined the premises to ascertain if the volume and force of the little stream was such as to render its application to machinery practicable: the result had proved satisfactory.

Within twenty minutes' walk from the convent exists a ruin of Roman construction, known by the name of Le Stanze d'Ovidio, from an ill-founded tradition which has established a villa of the poet's on the spot: it is considerably above the level of the plain, built against the flank of the mountain, overlooking a stony bank scantily clad with a few stunted oaks.

Its principal merit consists in the extensive and interesting view it commands of the whole valley; the fabric itself being nothing more than a terrace or rampart of considerable width and elevation, faced in its whole extent with *opus reticulatum*. It rests against the bare rock, and serves as a base to twelve arched divisions

or chambers, which might be supposed to have answered the purposes of thermæ or baths, if any vestiges of water-channels were observable; but the springs above mentioned rise some way below it in the flat, and are honoured with the title of Fonte d'Amore, as being the representative of that mentioned by the Solmonian bard. They form a pool, to which a circular form has been given, and a handsome stone border added, probably as a reservoir for fish to supply the monastery.

The retreat from which Peter of Morrone was dragged to fill the papal throne, is exactly above this ruin; it is little more than a stone hovel stuck against the perpendicular face of the mountain, upon a projection of just sufficient capacity to support it. The access to this hut is so rugged and precipitous as to require considerable time to reach it, although placed at no very great height.

Till very lately, two hermits had occupied it; but they died within a very short space of time of one another, and their unattractive abode has found as yet no tenant to succeed to them.

Solmona, having followed the fortunes of Marius, suffered greatly from the resentment of Sylla, who demolished its walls, and endeavoured by other devastations and outrages to sink it below the rank of a city. Under the emperors it was reduced to the condition of a colony. In the Christian æra it was dignified with an episcopal see, united to that of Valva, the successor of Corfinium; and in an age less remote it formed a portion of the country of the Marsi. Charles V. bestowed it in fief on Charles de Lannoi, one of his Belgian generals, whose descendants continued for some time to possess it, with the title of Prince; after which it passed, through inheritance or marriage, to other illustrious families, among which must be reckoned that of Borghese.

The town is placed between two streams: the Gizio, much the most copious, runs on the western side; while the smaller Vella waters its opposite extremity, and unites itself to the former river just below it. But among the numerous tributaries of the Aterno, that lend their aid to fertilize the valley of Solmona,

none holds a rank more eminent, from the abundance and never failing supplies which it furnishes, than the Sagittario, which irrigates nearly the whole southern portion of the plain. An excursion to its source proved extremely gratifying, from the peculiarities which mark its origin, and which, till I found myself so near it, had, no more than its existence, ever reached my knowledge.

I quitted the city early in the morning, and, crossing the Gizio, proceeded athwart the valley towards the mountains which bound its south-western extremity.

After passing under the village of Bugnara, pleasantly situated in a grove of oaks on the declivity of the above-mentioned hills, and descending into a deep and darkly wooded glen, we crossed the Sagittario flowing through its gloomy recesses, and, ascending the opposite slope, turned abruptly to the left, to follow the course of this river during the whole of the day's journey.

Above our path ran a considerable body of water, diverted from the main stream some way farther: this is conducted in an artificial

channel on the flank of the hills for the space of nine miles; after which it enters a subterranean aqueduct, an ancient labour of the Romans, cut through a mountain of considerable height, from which it issues in the direction of Rajano, at the other end of the plain, for the purpose of adding its supplies to those of the canal of S. Venanzio, already described. From this spot a path to the right leads over the mountain to Cocullo, which I have alluded to, in my account of the Marsi, as famous for the shrine of S. Domenico, the snake-charmer.

To return to the darkly-wooded glen of the Sagittario, along which our progress lay: a farther advance of about two miles brought us in sight of the village of Anversa, situated at its very extremity, and overhung with stupendous mountains crowding on each other so as to present the appearance of an impenetrable mass. The view is very striking, from this particularity, as well as the position of the village, which looks much larger than it really is, and offers at this distance an aspect entirely oriental, from the quantities of large

poplars that surround it, and are interspersed among its buildings, mimicking with illusive resemblance the cypress-trees that adorn all Turkish cities.

Leaving Anversa above us, a winding descent brought us to the edge of the river at a spot where the chaos of stones renders it impossible to believe but that the stream must spring from their very base. An abrupt angle in its course admits one into a ravine just wide enough to allow a passage for the torrent, and the narrow path that borders it, between two ridges of perpendicular rocks assuming the appearance of a wall, which they preserve during the whole extension of this singular pass or defile,—about six miles in length. It becomes somewhat wider soon after its commencement, below Anversa; and the river there receives a considerable increase from a lateral stream that rushes into it, after forming a beautiful cascade on the right.

A steep ascent then ensues, which, giving a more rapid impulsion to the progress of the waters, stamps them with an Alpine character by a succession of cataracts. There are no

less than seven or eight rustic bridges in the whole extension of the dell, which in no part opens to any breadth, and in many places leaves but a contracted space for the path, so little elevated above the banks, that, whenever the Sagittario is augmented by heavy rains or the melting of snow, the road becomes altogether impracticable.

In one spot the width from rock to rock is not above twelve feet; in another, the stream precipitates itself, through an aperture which it has worn through a large rock, into a deep chasm resembling the well-known grotto of Neptune at Tivoli; in a third, it passes under a stratum of limestone, (without having, as yet, given it the form of an arch,) which serves as a bridge, and gushes out from the opposite side, as if it oozed through it.

In one of the few spots that admit of a comparatively extended margin, the rocks are scattered in isolated masses, of considerable bulk and fantastic form; so that the course of the glen, or rather gully, offers a wild and singular aspect, considerably embellished by tufts of creepers and flowers growing out of the crevices.

This defile is designated in the country by the several appellations of Gole d'Anversa, or Foce di Scanno, the river here being usually denominated Acqua della Foce, and not assuming the name of Sagittario till it reaches the wider valley of Anversa; previous to which, at the commencement of the glen, a village called Castro Valve shows itself on a high eminence to the left. Near to its termination a beautiful group of little cascades is seen on the right, tumbling in succession from the mountain; on which another village, named Villa Lago, closes this extremity of the pass, having opposite to it a collection of miserable huts called Fratturo.

Here, also, several springs gush from under the hill; but the principal source of the Sagittario issues from the top, or rather pinnacle, of a mass composed of large blocks of limestone, heaped together by the hand of Nature into a pyramidal form, and apparently precluding all farther passage; so that it is only by climbing, with some difficulty, from one to the other that the summit can be attained; an operation with which our horses seemed

quite familiarised. These rocks are picturesquely variegated with patches of vegetation, and interspersed with high trees, which, casting their waving shadows over the innumerable cataracts that dash through the broken surface of this singular cone, add considerable effect to the originality of its general aspect.

I had understood, from the accounts I had received, that the Sagittario was produced by the superfluous waters of the lake of Scanno: but such is not the fact, at least apparently. From the highest among the rocks composing the pyramid just spoken of, the main spring bubbles with great force, and in considerable abundance; but, beyond it, nothing is seen but a plain of tolerably level surface, with large fragments of rocks scattered over it, which seem to have rolled from the surrounding mountains. This flat stretches for about a mile to the edge of the lake, (which is not visible from this spot,) exhibiting a platform of a wild and dreary character, with two or three little circular pools of very clear water.

It is, however, probable that it is the lake

Painted from an Original Drawing by W. Wales A.M.

which, receiving two considerable streams at its opposite extremity, and having no visible outlet, supplies the Sagittario by subterraneous channels running under this plain. This stony desert is encircled on all sides by high hills covered with fine woods rising from a bed of snow.

The lake itself is not seen till one is very near it, when its northernmost portion shows itself as a narrow elongated bight, to which form its banks seem to have a particular tendency, and thereby assume a very irregular appearance.

The circuit of this lake may measure about three miles: the immediate margin is in general deficient in trees, and therefore wanting in picturesque effect; except at the farthest end, where it becomes much narrower, and is on either edge furnished with fine timber, and on the left bank adorned by a chapel and hermitage, the only building that enlivens its banks: this edifice is dedicated to the Virgin, and called L'Annunziata, but more commonly La Madonna del Lago.

At this extremity, likewise, the two above-

mentioned streams enter its waters, after irrigating a contracted valley which extends as far as the village of Scanno, situated about two miles distant, but not discernible from the chapel.

We stopped here to breakfast, and sent our guide to obtain provender for our horses.

A few flat-bottomed boats were employed among the sedges in fishing for tench and barbel; but, if one may credit the natives, the most distinguished produce of the lake consists in a very fine species of red trout, weighing sometimes as much as twenty-five pounds.

The village of Scanno contains above two thousand souls, and was once as remarkable for the industrious habits and affluent circumstances of its inmates, as for the beauty of its women, whose dress was stamped with an Eastern character, and ornamented with a profusion of gold and silver.

On my way back, I was assailed by some showers, accompanied by gusts of wind that became absolutely terrific in the narrowest pass of the glen, and fully corroborated the ac-

counts I had heard of the impracticability of the road at some periods of the winter; at which time the natives are compelled to seek access to the high road to Solmona by the way of Rocca Valloscura, over regions presenting difficulties nearly equal to those of the defile, from the steepness and intricacy of the mountain paths.

CHAPTER X.

Consular Road.—View from above Pettorano.—Rocca Vall-oscura.— Piano di Cinquemiglia.—Rocca Rasa.—Palena.—Castel di Sangro. — Castrum Saricinorum.—Historical notices.—Excursion to the Voltorno.—Celeste, an ill-tempered Guide. — Bear-hunting. — Alfidena. — Pizzone.—Castellone. — Abbey of S. Vincenzo.—City of Samnium.—Sources of the Voltorno.—Prospect round S. Vincenzo.—Pastoral festival.—Course of the Sangro.—Rionero.—The Vandra.—Miranda.—Isernia.

Of Solmona, which we reached in the evening after this rather fatiguing excursion, we took leave the following day, to resume our progress southwards towards the capital, along the Consular road of the Abruzzi, as it is usually termed.

This is excellent in its whole extent, but the direction which was originally given to it appears to have been selected without much discrimination; for in most of the continued

ascents, which are of frequent recurrence, the slightest investigation of the features of the country is sufficient to show that they might have been in many cases avoided altogether, and in others considerably curtailed as well as softened.

The valley of Solmona terminates about four miles southwards of this town, under the large village of Pettorano, containing about two thousand eight hundred inhabitants, and situated at some elevation above the plain, though at nearly the base of the high range, which it is necessary to ascend by a winding line of nearly five miles' duration.

From this spot, the view looking back,—that is, northward—is, in point of extent and variety, one of the finest in the interior of the kingdom. It commands the whole plain as far as Popoli, with all its details of wood, water, cultivation, and villages; and is terminated by the Gran Sasso, which, somewhat inclined at its highest peak, appears from this spot more particularly deserving of its other appellation of Monte Corno.

The Gizio, which, as I have before noted,

waters the whole of the flat, has its source in a ravine just below Pettorano.

About two miles more of the tedious acclivity just mentioned bring one to Rocca Valloscura, a village of nine hundred inhabitants; the name of which is indicative of its position, being nearly half-way up the mountain, in a precipitous, narrow, and dark cleft.

We stopped here to bait, and found, in spite of its ominous name and ill-favoured aspect, that it contained a tolerable inn and some good houses, with the proprietor's coat of arms sculptured on a shield in stone over the doors: a custom maintained throughout the provinces of Abruzzo, in the meanest hamlets as well as the largest towns.

After resting an hour, we resumed our zigzag progress, which in the course of three miles brought us to the summit of the mountains and the northern extremity of the Piano di Cinquemiglia.

The name of this spot sufficiently denotes its nature, though it scarcely measures more than four miles: it is, in fact, one of those levels found on the higher portions of all mountains,

affording a commodious thoroughfare to travellers in serene weather, but invested with difficulties, and even perils, in the windy and snowy seasons. These have diminished considerably since the carriage-road has been constructed; but even now it is frequently impassable at different periods of the winter: and, in former times, it was calculated that no year elapsed without many individuals perishing in it, by being either overwhelmed in the snow-drifts, which accumulate with incredible rapidity, or frozen to death in seeking rest or refuge.

The breeze which, though from the south, blew cold and impetuous during the whole passage, gave us some idea of the terrific violence of the wintry hurricanes; but the general aspect of the scene presented no terrors.

It consists in a narrow valley, perfectly level, of less than a mile in breadth, between two ranges of hills, of which the right, called Argatone, is the highest, and clothed with some clumps of trees; while the other, or eastern ridge, is low and bare.

The soil is poor and light, covered in most

parts with short herbage, and in some with patches of sickly corn. Not a drop of water, or a single habitation, is to be seen.

The road, considerably raised on a dyke above the general surface, is bordered with stone posts of scarcely sufficient elevation to point out the track when the snow is deep, though erected for that purpose. Another deficiency is very palpable, in the absence of buildings of even the humblest kind, to serve as temporary places of refuge during the falls of snow, which are sudden and considered so dangerous.

Rocca del Raso, commonly called Rocca Rasa, is a village of about one thousand three hundred inhabitants, placed at the extremity of the Piano, or rather at that of another plain, of different form and character, which succeeds to it, but is on the same level.

From this, a good carriage-road, of recent construction, branches off to the left, leading to Palena, a town of two thousand inhabitants, represented as most thriving through the industry and affluence diffused by the existence of many large woollen manufactories. It is

from this place that another line of road, entering the vale of Solmona at Pacentro, on a parallel with the town itself, might have avoided the terrors of the Piano di Cinquemiglia, and the irksome tediousness of the descent which follows.

The position of Rocca Rasa is chilling and desolate; but it is well built, and has numberless fountains, and an establishment for weaving and dyeing coarse cloths gives it some animation.

After this, the road descends again in the same tortuous manner, and for about the same distance as at the northern extremity, till it reaches the plain of the Sangro, on a lower level than that of Solmona.

The scenery is somewhat less dreary, from the bolder outline of the mountains and the occasional appearance of some fine forests which extend to the road-side. A little wretched village, called Rocca di Cinquemiglia, is passed on the left; and, but for one of those singular and unaccountable caprices of the engineers, already noted, the end of our day's journey might have been attained an

hour sooner than it actually was, as the track touches the bank of the river Sangro at not more than a mile from the town of Castel di Sangro, and nearly on the same level; but an additional course of three miles is superadded to it, carried in winding lines up and down the flank of the mountains, before it again reaches that river, over which a bridge leads into the town.

The various branches of the river Sangro running along the valley of the same name, are here united into one stream; which, like the Pescara at Popoli, takes an abrupt bend behind the mountain against which the town is placed, and continues its course towards the Adriatic, into which it falls at a distance of thirty-five miles.

Castel di Sangro stands at the northern extremity of a plain about six miles long by two broad, which, notwithstanding the bleak character impressed upon it by its elevation above the sea, and the influence of a very cold temperature, presents an appearance of pastoral freshness which is not without attraction. The clearness and rapidity of the river, flowing be-

tween meadows of the finest turf, under a steep bank shaded by clumps of oaks, contributes greatly to favour the landscape.

The town contains about three thousand inhabitants, who cultivate many inferior branches of industry, which give it some animation. It is situated at the foot of a high rock, overhung by a mountain still more elevated: on the former are seen the remains of the very strong fortress from which it derives its name.

The high-road runs along the whole extent of the narrow and winding street of which it principally consists, and issues through a gateway at the opposite end. After crossing another brook, which comes from the mountains of Molise, and here mingles with the Sangro, it keeps parallel with the valley for about three miles, and then ascends the heights to the south-east.

This place has by some been supposed to occupy the site of the ancient Aufidena, one of the principal cities of this district of the Samnites; but the modern town of Alfidena, placed at the southern extremity of the valley, has, with much more probability, been recog-

nised as its representative: and Romanelli has considered Castel di Sangro as the successor of a fort mentioned by Zonaras under the name of Castrum Saricinorum, in which a Samnite, named Lollius, escaped from Roman captivity, had collected a large treasure realised by plunder and robbery, which he strenuously defended against the forces commanded by Q. Gallus and C. Fabius, who finally obtained possession of it after many obstacles.

This event is recorded as having been productive of such an increase of the circulating specie in the city of Rome, as to establish the use of the silver drachm.

Ptolemy and Zonaras employ the kappa as the initial of this tribe of the Samnite race; while Pliny designates them by the appellation of *Caraceni:* but Romanelli corrects both these readings, as founded on an error of the first letter, which, according to him, should be an *s;* thereby altering the name to Sariceni, as more appropriate to the dwellers on the banks of the Sarus, (the ancient denomination of the Sangro,) which nation Pliny divides into Upper and Lower. I shall leave the reader

to judge for himself on this point, and limit myself to observe that the arguments of the modern antiquary are well supported by topographical authorities.

It appears that its present appellation was conferred upon it by the Counts of the Marsi, already mentioned, whose territory extended thus far. They built the castle, of which the ruins are so considerable, and called it from the river which runs below its foundations.

At the period of the Norman dynasty it must have been a place of some importance, for its feudal lord was included in the catalogue of those who joined the crusade in the reign of William II, as possessing a fief furnishing five militants. Under the Angevine rule it belonged to the family of Sangro; and, after passing through the possession of many others, finally fell to that of a branch of the family of Carracioli, who to the title of Prince of Santo Buono, add that of Duke of Castel di Sangro.

The inhabitants manufacture a kind of coarse carpeting, tallow candles, and cards. Milk, and all productions resulting from it, are excellent

in the vicinity; and the river furnishes the best trout in the kingdom.

I was induced to suspend the progress of my journey homewards, by one day, for the sake of an excursion to the source of the Voltorno, taking Alfidena above mentioned in my way thither.

For that purpose, I departed from Castel di Sangro in the morning, keeping the line of the high-road as far as the spot where it enters the valley at a bridge over a little brook called Zittolo, which likewise divides the province of Abruzzo Ultra Seconda from that of Molise. I had been assured that a carriage might be used as far as Alfidena, and accordingly had sent on some saddle-horses to that place. But soon after quitting the high-road, to follow a diagonal course athwart the flat, we found the soil so deep, and our progress so impeded by loose stones and frequent runs of water, that we sent back our vehicle, judging it more expedient to continue this portion of our route on foot.

We were attended on this excursion by the ostler of the inn, who had somewhat eagerly,

though not gratuitously, tendered his services, as being acquainted with the country.

We found in this individual a specimen of that kind of disposition and temper, probably not rare in any region, which, without justifying absolute ill-usage or violence, is formed of such irritating materials as to render the necessity of such painful measures a matter of ever recurring speculation.

In this instance, the peculiar tendency to everything that is offensive in speech and manner was strangely contrasted with the name of *Celeste*, a very common one throughout the whole of Abruzzo; and which, on this day's journey, seemed destined to haunt us under its various modifications with the same repulsive impression attached to it. Our cross-grained guide not only did everything to retard and embarrass our movements, but likewise committed all the mischief that fell within his means: he threw stones at the poultry in the villages, insulted every human being he met, tormented every animal, and, finally, broke the pitcher of a poor woman, after drinking a portion of the water it contained, which she had

brought from a distant fountain, and kindly offered to us.

It was on remonstrating with him on this occasion, that we first learned his name; and we were ruminating on the singularity of the misnomer, when our attention was painfully roused by an old hag beating her grandchild with a pewter ladle in the most brutal and even alarming manner. We found she was called *Celeste* likewise. And, a little farther we met an urchin, of about five years old, goading a tired pet-lamb with a sharp-pointed stick, which he thrust alternately into his nostrils, eyes, and ears, dragging at the same time after him an unfledged blackbird tied by a broken leg to a braid of rushes; which unsophisticated child of nature was also named *Celestino.*

We were so disgusted with our companion, that after reaching the object of our researches, and going through a long discussion as to a shorter road for our return, we found ourselves compelled to bribe him to remain in the rear, to avoid all farther intercourse and altercation with him.

About a mile previous to reaching Alfidena, we saw the Sangro rushing from a dark glen, placed at a right angle with the valley, into which it sweeps with frightful impetuosity, and there receives another stream, called Rio Torto, flowing from Alfidena. This junction of the waters takes place under a poor village named Scontrone; the houses of which are scattered along a steep bank rising above the Sangro, and are backed by the gloomiest pine forests that any northern region can boast of.

These form one of the retreats, not of uncommon occurrence in this province, in which bears are bred, and hunted in the winter season; a species of sport for which this district has been celebrated for some centuries back, as Castel di Sangro is known to have frequently been the residence of Alfonso of Aragon, (second of the name,) when Duke of Calabria, for the sake of pursuing these attractive but hazardous amusements.

Continuing our walk towards Alfidena, we met the guardiano of an adjoining farm, who gave me a very lively and interesting relation of an encounter with these animals; and owned,

with great ingenuousness, that the feelings of alarm excited by the prosecution of such an undertaking far outweighed all those that were pleasurable. He described, in language so animated that it was almost poetical, the appearance of a large bear rendered furious by pursuit and the attacks of an armed multitude; and added, that no man, however strong-nerved, could behold an animal of that kind standing on his hind-legs within a yard of his person, stretching out his paws to grasp his throat, and sending forth yells of rage, without hearing the beatings of his own heart.

Such parties, always ending in the death of the victim, are however not unusual, and are almost always productive of dangerous wounds or lacerations on the persons of the sportsmen.

The population of Alfidena is rated at fifteen hundred inhabitants; but it may be more appropriately termed a large village than a town. It contains some good houses and rich proprietors, among which a large proportion of priests were assembled in the market-place, who, in the most courteous manner, offered us, not only

their assistance in showing us the antiquities, but the use of their houses, if we should be disposed to rest, or even to stay over the night.

We availed ourselves of the first proposal; but found that their good intentions by far exceeded their means of information; for the principal object they pointed out as the most worthy of remark, from its remote antiquity, was a ruined tower of the fourteenth century; after which they engaged in a violent altercation among each other as to the locality and date of the remains, which only proved that the majority had never even seen them.

We could, however, ascertain that they are few in number, and all situated on the steep hill beyond the river; the probable site of the ancient city and its citadel. This is identified by a range of polygon walls of considerable size, and evidently very remote construction. A curious monument likewise exists in an Oscan inscription, encrusted on the parapet of a bridge over the Rio Torto, which divides the modern town in two.

The stream, just below this, dashes through a very narrow cleft it has worn in a steep rock,

and precipitates itself into an abyss so dark that it appears unfathomable, at the bottom of which it is heard boiling with deafening roar.

We endeavoured to obtain from our obliging ciceroni some information regarding the excursion we had undertaken to the springs of the Voltorno; but the answers were so unsatisfactory, and founded on such uncertain bases, that we resigned ourselves to the guidance of our crabbed companion; and, trusting to that and our exertions, mounted our horses, and proceeded on our way.

On quitting Alfidena we toiled up a steep and barren hill, leading to a woody region diversified with little lawns and verdant glades, in which some fine cattle were grazing. Soon after, we left the course of the Rio Torto, and reached another glen, (which replaced us in the province of Terra di Lavoro,) along which a little brook runs for some miles, and finally throws itself into the very river we were seeking.

This circumstance, as soon as we were informed of it, proved how greatly the topographical difficulties of our journey had been mag-

nified, as the only embarrassment we now felt existed in the choice of paths on either side of the stream, flowing in a wide bed full of loose stones.

The banks were steep and well wooded; but that to the right presented a range of mountains, of superior elevation and magnificent form, thickly covered with forest to their very summits. On the same side, but much nearer the river, which is called Pizzone, stood a large village of the same name, containing about fifteen hundred inhabitants, but wearing a dreary aspect.

Shortly after, continuing our route down the glen, appeared, also on the right, but in a much higher position, what at first sight bore the appearance of a large town, but was in reality the village of Castellone; deriving this delusive semblance from its apparent junction with another called S. Vincenzo, from which it is in fact separated by a deep and precipitous, but very narrow ravine, which renders all direct communication between these totally impracticable, though placed so near to one another and on the same level.

The abrupt sloping ground that intervenes between them and the bottom of the valley is richly clothed with hanging orchards, vineyards, and gardens, enclosed with quick hedges and cultivated with vegetables of the most luxuriant growth. Among these, the stony and slippery path we followed had been conducted in the most capricious manner, with no other apparent object save that of lengthening it by a continued succession of descents and acclivities.

When just under the two above-mentioned villages, our attention was suddenly arrested by the sight of the Voltorno some way below us, whose winding course nearly described a circle in a small plain surrounded by a belt of high mountains. This, which we shortly reached, is the spot on which stood the abbey of S. Vincenzo, the remains of which are still extant on the banks of the river, at little less than a mile from its source.

This monastery was founded, according to tradition, early in the eighth century, by three brothers, or cousins, bearing the names of Paldo, Taso, and Tato; which, however sin-

gular they may sound to modern ears, were by no means very uncommon among the Lombard tribes.

The community, in the very infancy of its existence, boasted of a visit from Charlemagne, while marching against the Prince of Benevento. It subsequently was subjected to the order of St. Benedict, and, in the lapse of centuries, attained a distinguished rank for riches, piety, and learning. It was suppressed by the French, and afterwards almost entirely demolished; its valuable archives, among which was a chronicle of the middle ages of considerable historical value, having been transferred to Monte Cassino.

It appears admitted by most antiquaries that a city existed, even later than the æra of the Roman republic, bearing, as well as the district to which it belonged, the name of Samnium.

The most remote authority for its existence is to be found in one of the epitaphs of the Scipios at Rome (that of Cornelius Lucius Scipio Barbatus). The inscription records his having taken Taurasium, Cisannia, and *Samnium;* which word being thus joined to the

names of cities, has in this instance been considered as meaning one likewise, and not the province or country so denominated.

I own I cannot look upon this reading as inaccessible to controversy; but Florus also mentions a town of Samnium, and some writers of the Lower Empire allude to it in even a more positive manner. Paulus Diaconus, the Lombard historian, says, "In Samnium are the cities of Theate, Isernia, Aufidena, and *Samnium*, now consumed by old age, from which the whole province is named:" which goes far to prove that it still existed in the eighth century. Moreover, the chronicle of S. Vincenzo a Voltorno, above mentioned, written by the monks of this very monastery, seem to identify the site of this town with that of their own residence; first, by saying that this last is situated on the river Vulturnus at a place called Samnium; and afterwards by referring again to the spot as near the springs of Samnium, at a place called Cerrum.

The modern village of Cerro is not above a mile distant from the ruins of the convent; and it is therefore not unreasonable to con-

clude, that, if there did exist a city of Samnium, it must have stood very near them.

At present, the church (no longer used for public worship), and a portion of the dwelling of the monks, are entire; both of which are of comparatively modern construction: but numerous vestiges of antiquity, such as broken columns of granite, fine marble capitals, and a remarkable substruction of large stones without cement, which serves as a foundation for the west end of the church, denote most clearly the existence of some large structure, probably a temple, which seldom stood very far from a town.

The last-mentioned portion of building has all the appearance of having formed part of a peribolus; and two wide and deep trenches cut in the rock, parallel to each other, run in a direct line, on either side of the church, down into the glen that sinks just behind it, through which the Voltorno flows after having described a variety of meanders in front of it. These channels, which begin close to the river, appear to have been excavated for the purpose of receiving its waters, and thus con-

verting the spot into an island; and the manner in which they have been cut, bears the stamp of most remote execution.

The plain before the monastery is nearly circular, but of no great extent; the soil is clayey, and being, in its whole extension, cultivated with grain of a poor quality, the effect of its bare and parched surface after the harvest is the only drawback upon the peculiar, and, if I may so call it, eccentric beauty of the spot.

I followed the stream up to its very origin, which derives from two distinct springs, oozing in great abundance, but without violence, from the surface of a gravelly bed at the foot of a rocky hill, attached to a higher mountain, on which is placed, or rather perched, the village of Rocchetta.

These springs immediately join in forming a broad pool, as clear as crystal and as cold as ice, from which a considerable current is drawn off to turn a mill about two hundred yards farther, but soon unites itself to the main stream, which then assumes a slower progress along a deep weedy bed, in which the

cattle seemed greatly to delight in standing up to their shoulders.

If, as it has been somewhat fancifully inferred, this river obtained the name it bears from the tortuous course which characterises it, this peculiarity is nowhere so remarkable as near its birth-place. After describing nearly the half of a circle, it glides before the monastery, then resumes a retrograde direction towards its source, it next takes a sudden bend to the right, and, precipitating itself down a steep declivity in a succession of cataracts, reaches the glen of the Pizzone, which brook it receives, and again assumes a calmer progress behind the convent in an exactly parallel line with that of its course in front of it, though on a much inferior level. After this, it pursues its way through the deepening valley; and, repeating sinuosities measuring at least six miles, it finally returns to the immediate latitude of its original springs, and not much above a mile from them. After this, it deviates to the south-west, to seek the valley of Venafro; and it is evident, that if the high-road had been so planned as to run along its banks, not only a

very considerable distance, but all the hills between Isernia and Castel di Sangro might have been avoided.

But to return to S. Vincenzo: with the exception of its little sun-burnt plain, it is difficult to combine in one landscape features more favourable to its general aspect than those exhibited by the various objects with which it is surrounded.

Before it flows the river in all its serpentine deviations, under the hill of Rocchetta, studded with oaks, and crowned by one of those singularly picturesque constructions which unite in a baronial mansion the character of Gothic dignity to that of Italian elegance. On the left, sinks the deep glen, also watered by the Voltorno, and enlivened by the village of Colli. Opposite this, a much more striking effect is produced by the assemblage of buildings belonging to S. Vincenzo and Castellone, situated on a black and apparently inaccessible mass of rocks, showing themselves like a range of fortifications above, trailing draperies of ivy and flowering creepers, and looking down upon an inclined plane covered with vineyards and

gardens; while the distant peaks of the mountain called Metá, the highest of all the surrounding range, close the picture on that side. The back of the monastery enjoys a scarcely less singular though more gloomy prospect, in the village of Cerro, (on the opposite bank of the stream,) whose castle, placed as usual at its most elevated extremity, and flanked by four pyramidical towers, may stand for the type of feudal grandeur in its darkest plenitude of power.

Of the traces of the city which bore the name of the nation most celebrated for its persevering hostility to the Roman power, nothing has hitherto been discovered of sufficient importance to point out its exact situation; but several tombs have been found in the vicinity, as well as numerous articles of bronze, of the rudest workmanship, which a priest from Colli offered us for sale.

A large cattle fair is annually held on the area between the ruins of the monastery and the river, the original institution of which is considered of such remote antiquity as to warrant the notion that it is derived from a pagan

festivity: a circumstance by no means unfrequently exemplified in the same form in other parts of the kingdom.

We quitted the founts of the Voltorno, much gratified by the spectacle they and their accompaniments had presented; and retraced our way back to Alfidena, under the influence of those feelings of lassitude which are the inevitable result of excited interest and sated curiosity. A priest returning to Alfidena, to which place he belonged, joined our cavalcade, and somewhat relieved the tedium of a twice trodden track by the local information which his profession and habits enabled him to give. The last were far from sedentary; for, possessing a farm, or *massaria*, at Colli, near Cerro, the inspection it required obliged him to perform a journey there and back from Alfidena at least twice in every week.

His conversation was, consequently, almost entirely confined to topics of rural economy; and the most interesting part of it consisted in the account of a feast held by the proprietors of the pasture lands on the mountains at the end of the month of June, a period when the flocks

are driven to the highest regions in consequence of the increasing heat of the season.

The ostensible object of this meeting is the installation of the several herds and their attendants in their respective districts for the remainder of the summer: and the description he gave of it was singular, and certainly full as attractive as he meant it to be, though in quite a different point of view from that in which he regarded it.

He expatiated most eloquently on the extreme hilarity (to give it the most decorous name) which prevailed among the numerous and mixed communities there assembled.

By setting off from Alfidena long before daybreak, and travelling on horseback as far as it is practicable, the point of reunion (one of the highest pinnacles of the Meta) may be attained two hours before dark.

Here the cattle with their respective shepherds and shepherdesses, whose presence, he said, added great charms to the festivity, have previously arrived; and after the different portions of pasture have been marked out and allotted to their respective occupiers, Vespers

are sung, just as the sun is going down, and a solemn benediction given to the whole congregation, who afterwards sit down in different divisions to a pastoral, but by no means frugal repast, supplied entirely by the flocks; the sheep and kids being roasted entire, and the oxen in quarters, on spits formed of young pine trees.

A due proportion of wine and bread is provided; the former being cooled in the snow-pits which abound in these elevated regions.

The second course is entirely composed of preparations from the milk of cows, goats, and ewes, in all the varied forms they admit of; and the surrounding turf supplies a luxuriant dessert of wild strawberries.

The banquet is then suspended, while the party repair to a still higher region, to enjoy the spectacle of the illumination of the cupola of St. Peter's church at Rome, which can, with the aid of glasses, be descried from this spot.

I own that this unexpected climax to the festivities somewhat startled my powers of belief; but as, on a topographical examination of the respective localities, the fact is

within the limits of possibility, I will not venture to attempt a refutation of it.

After this diversion to the sports, they are resumed in the shape of song, dance, and games of all descriptions; while the elder part of the community retire to rest under huts constructed of boughs, and strewed with leaves and heath: many of the party staying over the following day to enjoy a repetition, on a reduced scale, of the banquet and the gambols that succeed to it.

Our companion, whose outward aspect presented a singular contrast to his animated description of such epicurean indulgences, pressed us very strongly to return to these parts on St. Peter's day, the 29th of June, to partake of enjoyments which he with reason considered to be so new to us; and moreover invited us to refresh ourselves at his house at Alfidena, where, he said, we might fare on all the early fruits of the season; among which he enumerated raw beans as a peculiar delicacy.

This invitation not being of so tempting a nature as the mountain feast, we found no great difficulty in resisting it, especially as

evening was coming on apace; therefore, passing hastily through Alfidena, we made the best of our way along the plain to Castel di Sangro.

The river from which it is named has its origin under the village of Gioja, already alluded to as one of the coldest spots in the kingdom, in the description of the regions that surround the Lacus Fucinus: it runs under Peschio Asserolo, Opi, Barrea, and Villetta, villages as difficult of access from their mountainous position, as they are insecure from the lawless uncivilized character of their inhabitants, but all of them more or less remarkable from the vestiges of ancient monuments which they contain.

It enters the plain under Scontrone, dividing its territory from that of Alfidena, and turning sharply to the northward; after passing by Castel di Sangro, it pursues its course, first through a hilly, and lastly an open country, till it throws itself into the Adriatic, between the villages of Fossaceca and Torino, at a spot which acquired a temporary renown in the twelfth century from having been chosen

as the point of embarkation for a crusading expedition which joined those commanded by Philip Augustus of France, the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, and Richard Cœur de Lion.

Resuming our progress southwards, we quitted the valley of the Sangro at the bridge over the Zittolo, previously mentioned, and began a tedious ascent over a range of hills of barren and unpromising appearance, though not totally devoid of cultivation; through the openings of which, distant glimpses of regions less comfortless occasionally showed themselves. Rionero, placed on the highest of the mountains, and through which the road is conducted, is a miserable place, much resembling Radicofani; and its aspect corroborated an observation which had previously sometimes suggested itself to me, that the name it bears is always attached, at least in the kingdom of Naples, to spots unfavoured by nature and fertility.

Soon after, we were surprised at suddenly obtaining a distinct, and apparently not remote prospect of the little circular plain of the Voltorno, the windings of the river, and

all the picturesque appendages that surround it, and which had so gratified us on the preceding day. The distance did not appear to be above three miles to the right, and an excursion to it from Rionero would consequently be an undertaking of much less duration and difficulty than one from Castel di Sangro.

After this, the descent lasts for five miles, till it reaches a narrow glen watered by the little river Vandra, on the banks of which a single house, at which we baited, answers the purposes of a tavern and post station; the mail changing horses here, between Isernia and Castel di Sangro.

The stream is little more than a mountain torrent running in a stony bed between steep banks of no beauty: it falls into the Voltorno previous to this last river quitting the mountainous district to enter the plain of Venafro.

After a short delay, we began once again the toilsome task of ascending; but this acclivity was of somewhat shorter duration, ending at a rocky peak of almost volcanic appearance, from which an extensive bird's eye view of a large

tract of flatter country to the southward is obtained.

The descent, which immediately succeeds, is carried along zigzag lines just under the little town of Miranda, perched on a rock to the left, one side of which, under the baronial castle, is perfectly perpendicular. The country, after this, though scarcely less stony, and apparently but little more favoured by climate, exhibits more satisfactory specimens of cultivation; and all the vineyards which supply the town of Isernia stretch on either side of the road, the plants trained low, as in all cold countries, and tied to canes.

We soon after arrived at the town above mentioned, and found, just outside of its gate, at this its northern extremity, a substantial-looking inn, having the advantage of an isolated situation; which, after gaining the confidence and good-will of the landlord, we found by no means deficient in tolerable accommodation.

Having entered the province of Molise, (which occupies the greatest portion of the ancient Samnium,) soon after quitting Castel di

Sangro, we had now reached the site of one of its most considerable cities, all of which, with slight modifications, have retained their original denominations; and it was not without a strong feeling of interest that I found myself in nearly the centre of a region, the history of which is so closely interwoven with that of the most celebrated of ancient republics.

CHAPTER XI.

The Samnites.—Isernia.—Varied Landscape.—Antiquities.—Aqueduct.—Working-classes.—Earthquakes.—Miracles.—Inns.—Country between Isernia and Venafro.—Charles of Anjou.—Mineral Springs.—Environs of Venafro.—Water for Royal use.—Hospitality.—Harvest-work.—Feast of S. Nicandro.—Privileges of Priests.—The ancient Venafrum.—Feudal Proprietors.—Baronial Castle.—Breed of Horses.—Environs of Presenzano.—Excursion from S. Angelo to Venafro.—Cataract on the Lete.—Caccia di Venafro.—Manufacture of Charcoal.—Royal Sporting Excursions.

Of all the nations which had to grapple with the overweening spirit of conquest that characterised the early ambition of the Romans, none displayed so much courage, animosity, and persevering resource, as the Samnites; who, if we may believe Livy, not only exhibited a degree of military skill which repeatedly baffled the efforts of their antagonists, but combined domestic institutions the best calculated to consolidate the power they had attained, with the possession of opulence and luxuries, which are in general the offspring of a long æra of civilization and peace.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive from what sources, a race, inhabiting a mountainous and unfertile district, distant from the sea, ill-suited to commerce, and almost impracticable to agriculture, could derive the more than elegant materials which formed the texture of their warlike habiliments, and the copiousness of precious metals that adorned them so profusely as to strike their enemies with a surprise not unmixed with terror.

The mountain now called Matese, for which no distinct ancient appellation has been preserved, may be looked upon as the centre of the country which they wrested from the aborigines, Osci, Opici, or Ausoni, when, under their first name of Sabelli, they separated from their parent stock, the Sabines, and, following the footsteps of a bull, (which traditionary fable has pointed out as their leader,) they sought a new and distinct district from that which had given them birth, wherein to found a colony and establish a nation.

It was at four different points at the roots of this stupendous mass, extending a circumference of seventy miles, that their principal cities

were constructed; and Bovianum, Alifæ, Telesia, and Æsernia, displayed, in their several positions, the skill they had already acquired in the art of fortification.

The extent of the regions which had been subjected to their rule, diverged by degrees to a considerable distance; and became subdivided into various tracts, known by the names of Pentri, Caudini, Caraceni, Hirpini, &c. which are easily traced to this day.

Among the tribe of the Pentri, the city of Æsernia held a pre-eminent station, but had submitted to the Roman yoke long before the ultimate subjugation of the Samnites, which was not effected till the close of the Social, Marsican, or Italic War, when, having fallen into the possession of the combined forces, Æsernia was destined to succeed to Corfinium as the bulwark in which they placed their last hopes of resistance; but, having failed in maintaining it against the attacks of the Romans, they ended by shutting themselves within the walls of Bovianum, which they considered their strongest hold, but with an equally fruitless result.

The modern town of Isernia, with its altered initial, is the seat of a bishop, and contains seven thousand inhabitants; a larger population than the space it occupies appears capable of holding, as it consists of little else than one long and tortuous street, running from south-west to north-east, and scarcely wide enough in many parts to admit the passage of a carriage.

To obviate this inconvenience, the high-road has been carried outside of the walls on the eastern flank of the city, between the bordering houses and one of the deep ravines that open in every direction, forming thereby a very handsome drive. Through the gulley which it overlooks, a brook called Fiume del Cavaliere, dashes impetuously among rocks and trees, under a small circular church dedicated to S. Cosimo and S. Damiano, and afterwards beneath a high perpendicular cliff covered with a drapery of evergreen creepers, falling from a grove of ilex that surrounds a monastery of Capuchins, vying in picturesque effect with the celebrated convent at Vico Varo, which it much resembles.

This stream turns several mills, and assists

the works of many manufactories; and, just below the town, one of its branches flows under a fine Roman arch, in excellent preservation, subsequently joining the main stream, which resumes a placid and widened course through a lovely dell that leads it to the Vandra, shortly before its union with the Voltorno.

I never beheld an inland landscape that struck me with more varied details of form and colouring than that unfolded by the short course of this river.

The antiquities of Isernia are such as to deserve some notice from the traveller. They consist of the remains of its very ancient polygon walls, which serve as foundations for the modern enclosure of the town, and which can be traced in nearly its whole circuit. Many inscriptions, and fragments of sculpture, are scattered in the streets, and incrusted on the walls of the principal church. But the most remarkable object is a subterranean channel, or aqueduct, of considerable depth and breadth, hewn in the rock for the space of a mile, and which to this day supplies the fountains and manufactories of the town with water brought from

under the little town of Miranda. The deepest *spiracula*, or air-holes, of which there are five in the whole extension of its course, and which rise from the level of the emissary to the surface of the soil, measure nearly ninety feet.

A portion of this stream runs through a ravine on the west side of the town, which by no means offers the picturesque appearance of the other.

In the town there exist two fountains, whose very ancient style of sculpture might lead one to imagine that they were original constructions of the Samnites themselves.

Isernia contains a sufficient number of establishments of industry, such as manufactories of paper, woollen cloths, earthenware, and others, to secure to it that aspect of animation and comparative ease which is ever so cheering to the eye of the traveller, especially when connected, as it usually is in this kingdom, with a courtesy and urbanity of manner seldom observable in a population entirely engrossed by the labours attached to an agricultural or pastoral life. It might be curious to investigate the causes of this peculiarity of manner, which

in our countries is usually exhibited in a reversed aspect. It is possible that a feeling of independence, imperfectly defined, but strongly impressed, may show itself in the outward demeanour of the individual who can scarcely look on his means of subsistence as secured by mercenary labour; while the servile habits of the hired manufacturer may gradually infuse themselves into his language and behaviour, even towards strangers. It is but justice to add to this observation, that the exterior alone is stamped with this peculiarity, and that with regard to sincerity and honesty the scale weighs in favour of the husbandman.

This portion of the realm has been at different, but unfortunately too frequent periods, most severely visited by the calamity so prevailing in the southern extremity of Europe: every succeeding century having seen Isernia and all the surrounding villages devastated by earthquakes of considerable violence and even duration; the effects of which are still but too evident in almost every part of the town, but more particularly in the buildings that border the exterior walls. The

last of these occurred in July 1805, and has been distinguished, from the day on which it took place, with the name of Earthquake of St. Anna. In the capital itself its shock was sufficient to cause some damage, and such alarm as to keep a large proportion of the population encamped in the open fields for many days; but, in the province of Molise, its operations were terrific, and Isernia alone lost one thousand inhabitants.

A young man, apparently an artificer, who had very obligingly tendered his services as cicerone in my perambulations about the place, surprised me not a little, in the midst of the information which he communicated in a rational and judicious manner, by extolling the miracles performed daily by an image of the Madonna in the church of SS. Cosimo and Damiano. Among these, he said, was an eternal immunity in favour of the town from thunderbolts, and the ravages of tempests, obtained through its special interference from Divine indulgence: the same privilege had been requested with regard to earthquakes, but, added he, sighing, *fin adesso non si ha potuto ottenere.*

Isernia, and indeed every post station on this road, boasts of one, or more inns. As I have before observed, the inn was, in this instance, rather above mediocrity; but a serious difficulty arose, which had sometimes happened before, in obtaining the undisputed possession of more than one room, with which, as it generally contains several beds, it is expected that the party, however numerous, cannot hesitate to be satisfied; nor does it seem possible to convince the landlords of the certain advantage secured to them by payment for the space these beds occupy, even when removed, and reserved for any later arrival, in another apartment. A circumstance of the most rare occurrence in a country where there are no diligences, and where the few travellers that pass seldom or ever sleep at an inn.

We found at this place, in some very good wine, a gratification we had not lately enjoyed, as the prevalence of *vino cotto*, or wine boiled to ensure its preservation, is almost universal throughout the provinces of Abruzzo and Molise; and this, to palates and stomachs unused to it, is equally unpleasant and unwholesome.

We quitted Isernia on the following day, and descending the steep promontory on which it is placed, by degrees lost sight of the cultivated grounds and patches of wood which adorn its base, to enter a stony, wild, and bleak-looking tract, the general aspect of which bespeaks an entirely different soil and even climate.

The windings of the little river that so greatly embellishes the environs of Isernia lose themselves in the distance to the right, as they approach the Voltorno; beyond whose course the little town of Montaquila is seen on an elevation; while on the left shore, and nearer the road, the smaller one of Macchia shows itself.

A region of quite opposite appearance then succeeds, being a sloping bank of considerable extent, watered by innumerable rills flowing from beneath the town of Monte Roduni, placed to the left on the lateral range: these give a fertility and freshness to the gardens and fields through which they are conducted, which add considerable charms to the prospect. A gradual descent then brings the road to a fine stone bridge over the Voltorno, which flows across the valley from its opposite side, in a

diagonal direction, and afterwards keeps at no great distance from the eastern ridge; while the road, on the contrary, leaves its banks to follow the western boundary of the plain; each exhibiting a chain of finely formed mountains covered with oak woods, interspersed with cultivation. At the bridge the province of Terra di Lavoro is re-entered, and the distant glimpses of the river which are displayed through the opening glades, together with the peculiar character of the banks beyond it, recall, upon a larger scale, some of the wilder scenery of our finest English parks. On the right, are the villages of Rocca Ravindola, and Pozzilli, and some others less considerable, placed in the usual inaccessible, but picturesque positions.

About three miles from Venafro, the road runs through a fine open grove, called Bosco di Tulliverno, and crosses a stream of the same name.

Near this spot Charles of Anjou is said to have forded the Voltorno, in his progress from the confines of the Roman states to meet the army of Manfred at Benevento. In this case he must have traversed the mountains from S

Germano (to which he had marched after the combat of Ceprano) to Venafro, or, leaving it to his right, have followed the course of the Tulliverno itself into the plain, and then pursued the line of the broader valley of the Voltorno, as far as its conjunction with the Calore, after which the banks of this last river conducted him to Benevento, under which it flows. This rapid march would account for his unexpected arrival before the walls of this city, and at the same time for the state of fatigue and exhaustion to which his troops were reduced, and which induced his antagonist to attack him without delay.

Other streams are crossed, descending from the mountains on the right, among which is one formed of many mineral springs, principally sulphureous and acidulous, rising very near the road. This water, as possessing the last-mentioned quality, is alluded to by Pliny. The salubrious qualities ascribed to the springs have led to the establishment of some temporary accommodations erected every summer by the natives, who resort to the spot for the purpose of drinking and bathing in them.

The kingdom of Naples is prolific in such springs, which however, at a distance from the metropolis, are seldom applied to so much advantage.

The nearer environs of Venafro are distinguished by a greater degree of cultivation, and the extensive plantations of fine olive-trees, which succeed to the oak forests, and clothe nearly the whole surface of the mountain, which overhangs the town, and seems, from this spot, to close and entirely terminate the valley. This, however, is an illusion, for its direction merely is changed by an abrupt angle which the river makes, and the plain which accompanies its course acquires, on the contrary, a much broader surface, as it spreads itself to the south, beneath the town, which thereby commands an extended reach of its dimensions. The town of Venafro, like most of those placed in similar situations, has an imposing aspect, which diminishes considerably on a nearer approach; it bears some resemblance to that of S. Germano, but is much inferior in many respects.

Like this last, it stands at the foot and on

the lower slope of a very high mountain, ending in two peaks, which is more bare, and steeper in its surface than that of Monte Cassino. Immediately under the last houses that touch the flat, innumerable springs of the finest water gush in abundance from the limestone rock. These are collected and dammed up in several pools and reservoirs, to supply the wants of the town; while the produce of one of them, pre-eminent for purity and lightness, has been inclosed in a marble basin, under lock and key, and exclusively appropriated to the royal table during the sporting excursions which the sovereigns have not unfrequently made to these parts. The late King Ferdinand held this water in such estimation, that he carried a large provision of it with him in a journey he made to Rome at the close of the last century, and had periodical supplies of it sent to him.

These springs unite, after having watered some gardens and turned some mills, and form a small river, called Fiume di S. Bartolomeo, which, in its limited course, produces very abundant stores of the best trout, crayfish, eels, and lamperns.

It runs along the base of the western range of hills as far as a village called Il Sesto; after which, crossing the high-road, it diverges along the valley in a diagonal line, and throws itself into the Voltorno.

The modern town of Venafro, which stands just below the site of the ancient, though dignified with an episcopal see, contains no more than three thousand inhabitants: a population so inadequate to the cultivation of the extensive territory belonging to the district, that an increase, amounting to the same number, is requisite during the labours of the harvest to ensure their successful completion. This, however, will not appear surprising, if the dimensions of such a plain, entirely given up to the cultivation of wheat, are taken into consideration.

On my first excursion into Abruzzo, I was received at Venafro in the house of a proprietor belonging to the middling class, whose territory in the environs placed him far above mediocrity, and enabled him to receive strangers with a degree of liberal hospitality which might have compensated for the overstrained display

of this quality usually exhibited to guests, but which, in this instance, was exercised with such forbearance as to be principally limited to the luxuries of the table, composed of the best wine, fish, and vegetables I ever tasted: productions which indicated that Venafro had not lost, in modern days, that fertility of soil and excellence of vegetation for which it was noted in more remote times.

The second time I visited the place, the master of the house was absent the whole day, inspecting the work of his reapers; while his wife remained in doors, more busily employed in preparing the successive supplies of food and refreshment, which form a portion of their daily stipend. These consist of three substantial meals of meat, vegetable soup (or *minestra verde*), bread, and as much wine as they can consume. Each person receives, besides, two carlins (about ten-pence), which may, in this country, be considered as an equitable, if not liberal remuneration for labours, which, nevertheless, appear to an inhabitant of the north, from their nature, and the season in which they are performed, fearfully severe and oppressive.

These labourers, who are mostly natives of Abruzzo, and have travelled a considerable distance, generally sleep in the fields; but the feast of S. Nicandro (the patron of Venafro) occurring just at that time, they all returned to pass the night within the walls of the town, which they entered at sunset in separate groups.

An itinerant bagpipe-player preceded each of these companies, who, almost without exception, were all engaged in singing to the full extent and power of their lungs, and dancing with a degree of energy and activity, which accorded but little with the fatigue they at the same time complained of.

It was, however, evident, that this state of excitement was produced by the refreshments they had so largely partaken of; but it was confined to the gambols they performed, for they made way for every well-dressed person, generally saluting them, and wishing them a good evening with much courtesy of manner. The female portion, which amounted to at least half the number, and among whom several were of a very advanced age, joined in these sports with a vivacity that was almost frightful.

In the interior of the mansion where I was so hospitably received, I had an opportunity, which had sometimes previously occurred, of observing the pre-eminent station which a priest always enjoys in a family of the middling class in this country.

It is frequently, I may add generally, the custom for one, among a numerous progeny of brothers, to adopt the clerical habit and functions. The choice of the individual is supposed to be originally influenced by a natural vocation, or a greater aptitude to study and acquirements; and it usually falls on the second or younger brother, who, having received the portion of learning deemed requisite to such a profession, enters holy orders; and whether this step leads to any lucrative preferment or not, he is immediately regarded in quite a distinct and superior light by the rest of the family.

It is customary, though not obligatory, for him to give up the possession of his share of the patrimonial property to the remaining members of his house, but on certain conditions, which ensure to him very considerable

personal advantages: such as a monthly allowance proportioned to what he has renounced, a separate table served in a more costly and delicate manner, at a different hour from that of the family meals, and, above all, the best apartment or room in the mansion: in addition to these privileges, he exacts a show of outward deference from the community and servants, which places him on a still higher level, and is in fact looked up to as their father and sovereign. His superior education enables him to keep the accounts, and is supposed to invest him with the experience requisite to direct all household affairs: all the contracts and financial concerns are submitted to his inspection; and while the other brothers go through the drudgery of cultivating the land, and the sisters perform the labours of menial servants, he receives the rents, or disposes of the produce, deciding, according to his sole judgment, on the most advantageous manner of placing the funds it may bring in.

This system is subject to some abuses; still, it is but fair to observe that, in most cases, it is the means of preserving a continuance

of friendly union and intercourse, in a large family, totally incompatible with our notions of personal independence, and it generally proves the medium of consolidating and improving the property, as well as the respectability of the whole united kindred.

This appeared the case in the family to which I allude, where the priest, in the absence of his brother, did the honours of the house with a tone of authority to which his sister-in-law submitted with greater deference than if it had emanated from her husband.

It is probable that the ancient Venafrum was originally comprised in the Samnite district, but for this hypothesis no authority exists; while most classical authors mention it as belonging to Campania; and it is by many of these extolled for the amenity of its situation, the fertility of its soil, and the excellence of the oil it produced. The former quality seems to have recommended it as a summer residence to many Romans who possessed villas there; but it is far from enjoying a similar character at present, as it suffers much from the heat of the temperature, and the air is not esteemed

very wholesome. Its other merits have survived in the form of wheat, oil, and wine, each being abundant and excellent in its kind.

Another species of celebrity it has likewise preserved in the size and strength of the wild boars, for which its environs were famed in Horace's days, as they are in these.

Some remains of antiquity still attest the rank it held: these consist in the faint vestiges of an amphitheatre, a portion of polygon walls, and numerous fragments of sculpture of Roman execution, as well as inscriptions.

In its modern state, the only impressive object it exhibits, is a handsome gateway, which admits the stranger into very tortuous, ill-paved, and narrow streets, so steep as to preclude the passage of carriages, and rendered still more gloomy by archways reaching across from house to house at regular intervals.

The cathedral, which is situated outside of the town, has nothing remarkable in or near it, except three very ancient and stately lime-trees, which, placed among the extensive olive-groves that stretch on all sides and cover more than half the hill, offer a grateful contrast in

their form and colour to the somewhat monotonous and dull appearance of that useful tree.

Under the Lombards Venafro was the seat of a Castaldus, afterwards of a Count; and, under that title, its possessor ranked in power and influence with those of Aquino and Teano.

Under the Angevine and Aragonese dynasties, a distinguished family of the name of Pandone held it as their principal fief: in later years it passed under the feudal rule of the Perettis, nephews to Sixtus V; afterwards, by marriage, to the Savellis; and, finally, was occupied by a branch of the Carracciolis, distinguished as Dukes of Miranda. It has now, by two successive marriages, passed, with that title, to the families of Gaetano and Medici (princes of Ottajano), the last of which at present possesses it.

Like most other towns of any consequence in feudal times, it boasted of a baronial castle as the residence of its lords; and this edifice, though neglected and out of repair, is not untenanted, or even unfurnished. Its isolated position, detached from and considerably above the town, gives it the advantage of a magnificent view over the plain of the Voltorno, and

the richly wooded mountains that confine it on either side.

The dimensions of the building, though inconsiderable for a mansion of that particular description, are still more than adequate to the accommodation of a modern family; while the stately hall, still adorned with the frescoes of two centuries back, and the distribution and ornaments of the apartments, evidently of the same date, offer a curious and not uninteresting specimen of the style of interior architecture of those days. The principal decoration of almost all the rooms and some of the corridors consists of portraits in fresco painting, as large as nature, of the horses appertaining to the breed of the Carracciolis, Dukes of Miranda: they are mostly represented with the warlike and equestrian accoutrements appropriated to the reign of Charles V, and each is furnished with an inscription, bearing the name, height, and date of birth of the animal, together with the titles of the individual to whom it was either given or sold; among which may be read those of some of the most distinguished characters of that splendid era, including the Imperial sovereign.

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It was by no means uncommon in those, and even less remote times, for the richest and most influential among the Neapolitan nobility to possess a breed of horses, distinguished by peculiarity of form and colour as belonging to their house; the preservation and improvement of which were attended to with considerable expense and solicitude by the respective owners, who attached much pride and importance to what they considered one of the most dignified appendages to their feudal power and consequence.

The repeated shocks given by the government to the superannuated system of feudal jurisdiction, and its final overthrow under the French, by breaking up the provincial establishments of this privileged class, put an end to all the institutions which accompanied them; and it is by name only that some races of horses, distinguished by that of their former breeders, are still preserved.

The distance from Venafro to Capua, by the high road, is estimated at twenty-six miles, the post station between these being Torricella, already alluded to in an early chapter, in which

the road itself is likewise described as far as the tavern called Il Pagliarone, where that which branches off to S. Germano joins it. The country which is traversed is quite flat, and the Voltorno, though seldom seen, rarely flows at any great distance from the road till it has passed the little town of Presenzano, when it deviates from this line to assume a course still nearer the base of the Matese (which forms the eastern flank of the whole valley), and turning abruptly under the buttresses of this mountain, it enters the valley of Piedimonte already described.

At about three miles from Venafro a stone-bridge is passed, which, crossing the river, carries another road, through a gate, into the royal chase or preserve, stretching along the wooded banks at the foot of the Matese beyond the stream, and vying in extent, as it does in beauty, with the celebrated forest of Persano.

No villages, or towns, are gone through: those of Rocca Pipirozza and Sesto, picturesquely situated on the western range, are passed; but a few taverns are the only buildings that are within call of the road, which is

somewhat tedious, though commanding distant views not destitute of attraction. Several heaps of shapeless Roman brickwork are scattered along the flat, probably the remains of ancient sepulchres.

After Presenzano, the nearer prospect acquires considerable improvement from a detached cluster of hills, combining the picturesque effects produced by a happy intermixture of woods, Gothic ruins, stately monastic edifices, and the situations of the villages of Vairano and Marzanello, placed one at the foot, the other on the summit of these mountains. A very short distance then brings the traveller to the tavern above-mentioned, beyond which it is needless for me to direct the reader's attention over beaten ground.

During the first excursion I made into the Abruzzi, I was induced to perform the journey from the valley of Piedimonte to Venafro through the royal chase just referred to, as offering, to an equestrian wayfarer, a much more pleasing and shorter track than that alluded to as the post-road. I shall, consequently, describe it in an inverse direction, that is,

from south-east to north-west, beginning at the village of Sant' Angelo, from which I started.

Passing under Raviscanino, and approaching the river, a portion of wild forest scenery is explored, not sufficiently stocked with timber to preclude the cultivation of corn.

The immediate banks of the river being flat, and exposed to its occasional ravages, have a dreary and uncouth aspect; but it is relieved by the isolated hill that rises on the opposite bank, (the reverse of that on which Vairano is placed,) which, covered with a thicket of ilex, is most appropriately named Verdesca. It is between this hill and the Matese, that the Voltorno flows, effecting through this narrow defile its passage from one plain into another.

After this, on the right is seen the village of Ailano, seated some way higher on the slope of the mountain, on the edge of a rapid and clear stream called the Lete, which has its source in the higher regions of the Matese, near the village of Letino. It rushes down the steep with great impetuosity, and is subdivided into many artificial channels, for the purpose of working

some mills and irrigating the flatter country, after which it falls into the Voltorno.

This stream furnishes very good trout, a large supply of which are yearly caught alive and transported to Caserta, to keep up the stock fed and fattened in the reservoir at the foot of the great cascade.

Three miles farther along the edge of the Lete stands the little village of Prata, surrounded by a gloomy and barren enclosure of mountains: and thus far I went on horseback, to obtain a view of a fall of this river, which is not without interest, from the singularity of its formation and position. I wished to have followed the ravine from which it emerges, and which leads in a winding direction to the very foot of the cataract; but this was impracticable from its extreme narrowness, which leaves on either side no space even for a footpath. The only way of getting a sight of it was to ascend the hills at some distance, till I reached a spot nearly parallel with the level from which it springs, and which enabled the eye to embrace nearly the whole of its height, which must, at least, measure three hundred feet. The body

of water is in no degree proportioned in volume to this elevation, and it therefore produces but little effect, especially from the distance where I stood.

The feature, however, which distinguishes it from other cascades of the same nature, is the point which first marks its appearance, and from which it casts its sheet of foam into the abyss beneath; this being not from the surface of the cliff, but some way below, which gives it the semblance of issuing from a small cave. This is owing to the subterraneous course which the stream assumes for nearly half a mile previous to forming this cataract. After passing under the village of Letino, one of the highest on the Matese, it is suddenly absorbed in a rocky cleft, where it entirely disappears, only to emerge from the flank of the perpendicular rock above described.

I regretted that my time was too limited to allow of my climbing up as high as its source; and retraced my steps as far as Ailano, and the level of the Voltorno. After passing by another village placed on the right, called Pratella, and an hour's more progress, we entered

the royal preserve, which from this spot occupies a longitudinal extent of six miles, but stretches so considerably over the mountain as to constitute a circuit of four-and-twenty, which is entirely walled or fenced.

The keeper's house, at the entrance of this privileged district, is most beautifully situated near a fountain backed by the forest, commanding to the right and left picturesque views of the valley, and having in front the village of Sesto, perched on the opposite range of hills beyond the river and the high road.

A very excellent track, wide enough for two carriages, runs along the whole length of this chase, parallel with the Voltorno, the edge of which sometimes forms its boundary: where it does not, a belt of cultivated ground intervenes, which the wooden paling very ineffectually protects against the incursions of the wild boars. The interior is again subdivided by fences, probably to keep the varieties of animals asunder.

Venafro in antiquity was noted for the ferocity of its wolves, as well as the size of its

boars; and in this particular it still claims distinction in the province. We saw the marks of the spring traps, called *taglioni*, which are placed in the winter along the road, to catch the former animals, as they cross it from the mountain to the flat grounds near the river.

The forest consists principally of oak timber, but there is a proportion of beech and elm; and among the underwood, which is very luxuriant, a great many large thorns are found.

This spacious tract, commonly called Caccia di Venafro, and as often Riserva di Torcino, affords to the royal proprietor some advantages besides the mere gratification of field sports; as the trees are let, or, more properly speaking, sold, in lots every year, for the purpose of being felled and burnt into charcoal: an operation which can only be performed from the month of November to the middle of June, and which was going on, in some parts, when I passed.

The trees selected for destruction are marked in such proportion as to furnish about thirty to each *moggio*, or acre; and a great portion of

the domain is thus let out annually at eleven ducats the moggio.

The contractor is obliged to find security for the payment, which he engages to make after a stipulated space of time granted to enable him to dispose of the produce. This he is bound to manufacture and carry off from the spot within the period above-mentioned; so that considerable activity is requisite to fulfil the terms of the agreement, which are rigidly enforced. But the speculation is usually successful, from the certain sale and consumption of the material, the only one used as fuel for culinary and manufacturing purposes in the whole country.

The labours requisite to reduce the timber to charcoal require great exertions and vigilance in the workmen, and a constant and minute inspection from the overseer. Nothing, as may easily be imagined, can be more detrimental to the beauty and rural character of the scenery than such an operation.

The inclosure terminates at its north-west extremity in a portion of inclosed meadows,

watered by a small brook, among which is placed the habitation of the head keeper, and a building adapted to the temporary accommodation of the royal party on sporting excursions. It contains large stables, a suite of small rooms, and a larger hall to dine in, besides kitchen and other useful appendages; but the edifice is by no means of sufficient dimensions to allow of a residence of more than a few hours; so that it is a matter of surprise that some additional expense has not been bestowed on the original establishment, to provide it with a mansion of adequate capacity and convenience to receive the royal sportsmen and their attendants, who, when they visit these regions, inhabit a very indifferent house in the town of Venafro, so limited in its accommodations that all their attendants and retainers are billeted on the more affluent inhabitants.

This circumstance, and the distance from the capital, added to the enormous expenditure entailed on all royal journeys by antiquated customs and etiquette, have rendered a sporting excursion to Venafro an event of rare occur-

rence in later times; and during a residence of seventeen years in the kingdom, I do not recollect more than two having taken place.

The building above-mentioned is at a very short distance from the gate opening from the bridge over the Voltorno, which joins the high road at about three miles from Venafro.

EXCURSION

INTO

THE PROVINCE OF MOLISE,

OR SAMNIUM.

VOL. II.

EXCURSION

INTO

THE PROVINCE OF MOLISE.

CHAPTER I.

View on approaching Maddaloni.—The town.—Dukes of Maddaloni.—Aqueduct.—Sant' Agata de' Goti.—The Caudine Forks.—The Calore.—Solipaca.—Suspension Bridge.—Guardia delle Sole.—Views from it.—A tragical event.—Morcone.—Altilia, the ancient Sepianum.—Its ruins and antiquities.—Tavern near Sepino.—A bandit innkeeper.—Suburb of Campobasso.—Trade of the City.

The first station on the road to Campobasso is at Maddaloni, a good town, situated about sixteen miles from Naples, at the foot of the same range of hills which rises behind Caserta, from which place it is distant four miles.

It is not, however, necessary to go through this last to reach it, the road from Naples turning off to the right four miles short of the royal palace; but I had slept there, and consequently must direct the reader's attention to the route I followed.

This runs along a well-cultivated fertile tract of country, about half a mile from the base of the hills, through several well-built villages, which add great animation to the journey; while the view of Maddaloni itself, which improves on a nearer approach, gives great effect to the general character of a landscape peculiar only to the south of Italy,—I may add, to the Neapolitan realm.

The somewhat bare aspect of the hilly ridge is amply compensated by its bold and fantastic outline; while its lower flanks are luxuriantly clothed with olive plantations, mixing with clumps of deciduous trees of more genial tint, and the varied cultivation incidental to these latitudes. The lower members of the mountain range, crowned by the imposing and picturesque ruins of a feudal castle, extend, like a promontory, into the ample plain which is comprehended under the title of the province of Naples; and, attached to their extremity, are seen the broken masses of structure which form the town of Maddaloni, combining palaces of impressive, though irregular architecture, with towers and cupolas, agreeably relieved by the rounded masses of orange groves, or the

tapering cypress, overtopping balustrades and arched terraces; while the warm indescribable colouring, peculiar to these regions, seems to act on the general sense of the beholder, more forcibly than on the mere organs of sight.

The interior of the town did not, contrary to my expectations, belie its outward appearance; for I have seen none of equal dimensions in this part of Europe that can boast of so many good houses, such wide and regular streets, and which bears at the same time, in all its details, so cleanly and well-conditioned an aspect. It contains about eleven thousand inhabitants, and is a thriving place, principally in consequence of the fertility of its territory, the facility of irrigation, and the abundance and excellence of its various productions.

Its origin is probably Lombard, but the remains of Calatia Cisvulturnensis are supposed to exist at no great distance.

The title of duke, which it formerly conferred, was borne by one of the influential branches of the Carafa family: but this dignity, not of very remote date, is now extinct; while the fiefs and extensive appendages have been inherited and divided by collateral claimants.

It was under the rule of the Spanish viceroys that the opulence and power of the Dukes of Maddaloni attained their highest point; and the individual who owned the title during the notorious revolution effected by Masaniello was particularly obnoxious to the popular party. He had the good fortune to escape the fury of the multitude; but his brother fell a victim to it, and the memoirs of the times record the acts of vengeance and animosity exercised against his name and property at Naples; while his lady's carriage was used by Masaniello's wife and mother when they paid their first visit of ceremony to the Vice-queen, and her jewels served to decorate their persons on this memorable occasion. According to the Duke of Guise, the same ornaments were subsequently applied to a similar purpose by the wife of another popular leader, named Gennaro Annese.

To return to the town of Maddaloni: the road to it from Caserta, following the same line along the base of the mountains, leads to Arienzo, where it falls into the main communication between Naples and Benevento.

The more frequented track to Campobasso

runs through the whole of Maddaloni, and, describing an abrupt angle to the left, ascends a narrow pass between two low hills, which is not apparent from the plain.

This defile is about two miles in length, and brings the traveller where the valley, widening suddenly, is traversed in its whole breadth by the celebrated aqueduct generally termed I Ponti di Maddaloni, the high-road being conducted under the centre arch. This far-famed construction, erected by Charles III. to furnish the artificial cascade at Caserta with water, has been so often and so accurately described in all books of travels, and is so well known to all northern visitors, that a detailed account of it would probably be considered superfluous.

The vale, which afterwards assumes still more expanded dimensions, shows on the right, as far as the eye can reach, the line of this water-course, along the flank of Mount Taburnus. It is marked by a wide path, with, at certain intervals, pilasters, or turrets, at the spots where openings have been constructed to turn off the stream, or cleanse such portions of the channel as may occasionally require it.

Soon after passing the arches, the little village of Valle is seen on the left, while the mountains on either side assume a bolder outline; especially the ridge of Taburnus, which is distinguished by two other names, Durazzano and Longano, the latter portion being that to which the aqueduct is united: the higher regions, richly clothed with dark forests on this side of it, (the northern aspect,) stretch as far as Benevento. The valley displays the richest and most varied style of cultivation, the road running through spacious orchards of cherry and apricot trees.

A track, practicable for carriages, branches off on the right, and leads to Sant' Agata de' Goti, an episcopal town, most singularly placed, about four miles off, on a volcanic hill, surrounded by the meanderings of the little river Isclero, which reaches it through a defile which many antiquaries have given the preference to as the celebrated Caudine Forks, over that extending between Arienzo and Arpaja, generally considered as the representative of that spot.

This pass, leading from Sant' Agata to the village of Mojano, undoubtedly coincides, in its

physical appearance at least, more closely with the description left us of the disastrous scene of Roman defeat than the other; the Isclero, and the contracted path which borders it, filling up the whole space between the lateral hills, which from their rugged steepness are impracticable on either side.

Sant' Agata de' Goti is supposed to stand very near, if not upon, the site of the ancient Saticola; some remains of ancient constructions being visible near it, and many tombs with fine vases having been found in the vicinity. In its present condition it contains three thousand inhabitants, and offers nothing remarkable but its picturesque situation contrasted with the peculiar gloomy appearance presented by its houses, the walls and roofs of which are nearly black.

The Isclero winds its way into the broader valley, where the high road crosses it; soon after which the Voltorno becomes visible, with a fine view of Cajazzo and the eastern front of the hill on which it stands. Shortly after this, the traveller goes through the little village of Ducentola, with a picturesque ruined castle,

and a fine baronial mansion of good architecture.

Beyond the Voltorno, on the left, are seen two large villages, Squilla and Campagnano; which last is situated very near the junction of the Calore with the former river. The road is conducted much nearer the roots of Mount Taburnus, deviating more or less, with their projections, into the plain, till the banks of the Calore are reached, along which it runs parallel for some time. This stream, which flows from Benevento, where it has received the waters of the Sabbato, exhibits here exactly the same aspect, breadth, and colour, as the Voltorno, into which it falls very near this spot. It was crossed by means of an inconvenient ferry-boat, when I made this excursion in 1831, at a short distance from the little town of Solipaca, beautifully situated at the foot of Taburnus, but scarcely visible from the road on account of the masses of forest scenery which surround it.

This place contains three thousand souls, but is esteemed unhealthy, either from its proximity to the river or the dampness of its peculiar

position, looking to the north, and shut out by the impending mountain behind it from all the advantages of sunshine or mild breezes.

Near the ferry, stand the four piers of a fine stone bridge, the arches of which gave way and fell into the water before it was ever used. It seemed a matter of wonder that they had been left in that state, while a wooden bridge might have been established, at a very slight expense, upon these pillars: since that, however, in the present year 1835, a suspension bridge has been completed by order of the reigning sovereign, who has thereby conferred an inestimable benefit on the population of the contiguous provinces and the public at large. Immediately after crossing the river, the road begins a long and very tedious ascent on one of the buttresses of Mount Matese, divided here from Taburnus by the contracted glen through which the Calore flows.

The whole extension of this mighty mountain had for some time spread itself on the left as far as Piedimonte, which likewise showed itself under the highest of the snow-capped peaks.

The portion of Matese which the road ascends, has at first an aspect of nakedness, which vanishes on a nearer approach, as it is well cultivated, and sufficiently furnished with olive and fruit trees to somewhat divert the tedium of a climb of three miles, between the banks of the river and the little town of Guardia Sanframondo, or delle Sole, where I halted for the rest of the day and night. The line of the ancient road is still visible along the base of the mountain; a direction more extended than the present, but attended probably with greater advantages in point of time and practicability.

The place I stopped at derives its name, Guardia, from having been originally founded as a stronghold, or outpost, to guard the approach to the town of Cerreto, situated three miles farther within the recesses of the mountain; and became the residence, as well as the principal feudal tenure, of the Sanframondo family, who bore the title of Counts of Cerreto, and possessed all the surrounding territory. Guardia received, from this circumstance, the additional appellation of Sanframondo, which it still retains; though more usually designated

by that of delle Sole, from a manufacture of coarse hides for the soles of shoes, which occupies a great portion of its inhabitants,—about four thousand in number.

The houses of this town, which is small for this population, are huddled above one another on the rugged and irregular surface of the hill, leaving between their rows narrow and dark lanes, rendered still more impracticable by occasional flights of dilapidated steps. The road is carried through one portion of it which is evidently of more recent construction, and offers the only level surface it can boast of; and here I found a very tolerable small inn.

The exterior of Guardia, which in its position bears a great resemblance to Cajazzo, is extremely picturesque; and the views from it, particularly to the south and eastward, equal, if they do not surpass, the most celebrated prospects in Italy. In these directions, it commands the course of the two rivers Voltorno and Calore to the point of their junction, as well as the plain beyond it, under Mount Taburnus: on the other side it reaches nearly to Piedimonte, through the beautiful valley of

Faicchio, on the flank of the Matese, whose higher regions, glittering with snow, and broken into bluff masses or fantastic peaks, offer a majestic contrast to the softer beauties which grace the midway belt of forest that intervenes between the bare and sublime extremities of the mountain and the cultivated lands that enrich its roots.

These lower slopes show, between their clumps of olive and fruit trees, the windings of a little stream called the Titerno, which, at this distance, have the effect of so many silver pools; while a limited proportion of villages, and occasionally a ruined castle or white-washed monastery, appears upon some isolated projection thrust forth by the roots of the mountain into the numerous dark and mysterious glens that border them.

Several springs, which rise just above Guardia, supply the town with numerous fountains of the purest water: these unite in forming a small river, called Loratino, which rushes down the steeper flanks of the hill, and enters the Calore.

The environs of this place are well culti-

vated, principally with olives and vines: the latter produce a good but strong liquor, which furnishes the natives with what they deem a plausible excuse for the hot and quarrelsome disposition they are said to possess, productive of frequent and sometimes sanguinary affrays. A tragical event, resulting from one of these altercations, had occurred on the evening previous to my arrival at Guardia, which had caused a deep, and apparently salutary impression on the natives. One of them had a dispute with another about the trifling sum of five grains, (about two pence English,) and, under the excitement produced by liquor, pursued his antagonist with sufficient violence to induce this last, who was unarmed, to conceal himself. The former, disappointed of finding him in a house where he had sought him, ran down the stairs in a state of increased exasperation, when his foot slipped, and he fell on the very knife which he carried for the purpose of revenge, in such a position that it pierced him to the heart, and he died in a few minutes. The body was lying at the office of the commissary of police, waiting for the decision of the

Bishop of Cerreto as to the mode of its interment, the priest of the town not having ventured to grant it Christian burial under such peculiar circumstances.

I quitted Guardia early the next morning, and following the upper flank of the mountain, along a good and level road which skirts it on this side, soon entered the *Contado di Molise*, or, to speak more classically, the ancient Samnium, across a ravine, over which a very fine arch has been erected, near the little village of Santo Lupo. A more northern direction assumed by the track I pursued, transfers its course from the valley of the Calore to that of its tributary stream the Tamaro; and enables the traveller, by seeing beyond the foot of Mount Taburnus, to catch a distinct glimpse of Benevento, to the south-west, in the flat beneath that mountain.

After this, a long succession of tedious ascents and declivities ensue, through a tract of country as varied in its produce and fertility as in its surface; sometimes presenting a clayey cold soil, poorly cultivated and devoid of trees, and exhibiting at others portions of forest scenery growing round huge isolated blocks of

grey limestone, and interspersed with patches of vineyards and richer vegetation.

A village, called Ponte Landolfo, is passed to the right of, and very near, the road; its aspect is extremely picturesque: and in a glen, just below it, stands one of the above-mentioned masses of rock, rising in a pyramidical form to a very considerable height, and terminating in a very acute point or spire, which gives it a most striking and fantastic appearance.

Soon after this, and a long descent, I reached the banks of the Tamaro, which I followed for some time, leaving the respectable-looking town of Morcone about two miles to the left, on the side of the mountain; while another village, in nearly a similar position on the opposite side of the valley across the river, bears the name of Santa Croce di Morcone. The former possesses near it some vestiges of antiquity; to which circumstance, and a faint analogy of name, it once owed the honour of representing the ancient Murgantia, a city of some importance, belonging to the Samnites Pentri: but some more recent discoveries have fixed its site at a place called Baselice, about ten miles distant;

leaving to Morcone the diminished distinction attached to the remains of Mucræ, a spot unknown in history, and only mentioned by Silius Italicus.

The Tamaro, now reduced to a scanty mountain stream tumbling wildly over a rocky bed, is soon after crossed; and on the left, at no great distance from the road, the little town of Sassinoro shows itself in a pleasing situation, near a clear and rapid brook that bears its name and falls into the Tamaro: after which, an ascent of some steepness brings the traveller into a wider valley of a colder and less attractive aspect, and the river is crossed again.

Shortly after this, I stopped at a solitary tavern by the road-side, about two miles from the town of Sepino, situated on a higher bank to the left. I availed myself of the time employed in refreshing the horses to visit the ruins of the ancient Sepianum, under the hill on which the modern town is placed. The path leading to these remains afforded a most agreeable ride, skirting the base of the mountain along rich meadows that owe their luxuriance to a quantity of clear rills winding be-

neath some fine oaks. The spot which is looked upon as the ancient Sepianum is now called Altilia, an appellation it probably acquired in the early ages of Christianity, but of which the derivation is not known.

The complete preservation of the wall that encircles the existing vestiges, points out the exact dimensions; and these are not equal to the idea that must naturally suggest itself of a city which held a prominent rank among the most distinguished of Samnium, and could offer the determined and protracted resistance against Papirius Cursor, and his experienced troops, which Livy has recorded.

As a Roman colony was established at Sepianum under Nero, and it became a *municipium*, it is not improbable that a new form was then given to it, by inclosing only a particular portion of the ancient town within the boundaries of the existing walls, and rendering it thereby a fort or citadel. The masonry of these walls, and the style of most of the remains which they encircle, which is of Roman and not very remote execution, may corroborate this supposition. The fragments are, nevertheless, ex-

tremely interesting, as much from their number as from some peculiarities they exhibit, among which nothing is more remarkable than the regularity of line in the walls, and that observed in the situation of the four gates, placed at the four cardinal points, at exact distances from each other, with two straight roads, running between them, intersecting each other exactly in the centre of the inclosure. This last describes a perfect square with the angles slightly rounded off, and the line of walls, which are of the best species of *opus reticulatum*, is entire in its extension, though ruinous in many parts.

The gates, of which the piers in all four, and the whole arch in one, are extant, were faced with fine large slabs over a mass of masonry of smaller ones. Their depth, solidity, and the massive square towers which flanked each of them, give them, even in their dilapidated state, a most imposing aspect. The soil has accumulated round the basements with the lapse of time, as well as throughout the whole interior circuit, which has been converted to the uses and purpose of a grazing farm, and in which

several modern rural edifices have been constructed. One of these conceals, in a dark cow-stable, the vestiges of a theatre: the portion allotted to the spectators, which, as usual, was semicircular or oval, seems to have ended on each side in a square vestibule, or *atrium*, of four arches supported by pilasters. Both these are extant; but appear, though of similar form, to have been erected at different periods, as the masonry offers very essential varieties. That which is the most ancient is formed of immense blocks, equal in structure to any existing specimens of the same nature; the other is not only inferior in size and execution, but the quality of the materials is not the same.

Besides these, there are many other substructions and vestiges of buildings, some of which are pointed out as temples; and numberless broken shafts of marble columns, as well as fragments of sculpture of all kinds, and inscriptions, which last have all been collected, and inserted into the wall of one of the modern edifices.

I was fortunate enough to meet the owner of these premises, who is a proprietor of Sepino,

and kindly accompanied me in my investigations, in which he seemed to take much interest and some pride. He showed them to me in detail, and lamented that the tenure of the property, in which he only had a life-interest, did not allow him to remove the buildings which placed such impediments in the way of effecting farther discoveries, and likewise prevented his altering the nature of the cultivation from pasture to arable, which would admit of advantageous excavations. He had, however, made several whenever the possibility of so doing had offered itself; and one of these had brought to light the subterranean course of a fine aqueduct, the contents of which, oozing through the herbage, had, until then, been looked upon as a natural spring rising at this spot.

The zeal of preceding antiquaries has, fortunately, preserved, and transmitted to posterity, the knowledge of the most interesting relic existing among the ruins of Sepianum, the present condition of which is such as to render all satisfactory examination of it impracticable. This was an inscription of considerable length,

placed on the eastern gateway, the letters of which are so entirely defaced and corroded by the effects of time and weather, that they have for many years past been illegible, though the lines can still be traced. Both Gruter and Muratori have published this inscription, consisting of an admonition to the magistrates of the city of Sepianum, ordering them to protect the drivers and proprietors of the flocks which annually passed through the town from the rudeness and ill-conduct of the soldiers of the garrison, as well as of the inhabitants; citing the complaints that had been transmitted to Rome of these abuses and irregularities, as contained in two letters to influential personages in the capital, the contents of which are copied verbatim. This document not only corroborates, what was already known, that the periodical migration of the herds from Apulia to the mountains is of most ancient origin, but it proves that they observed the same line of route which they follow to the present day; the road that runs from the east to the western gate of this inclosure, falling into the line of the *tratturos*, or sheep-paths, exclusively

allotted to the use of the flocks in their annual journeys.

The necessity of continuing mine within a limited time withdrew me from the ruins of Sepianum, which I quitted with much reluctance after gratefully acknowledging the kindness of their proprietor, who strongly pressed me to make some sojourn with him at his mansion in the modern town of Sepino; an invitation which I could willingly have converted into a residence in one of the rural dwellings erected among these monuments, which, from the interest they offer, and the amenity of their local position in verdant meadows, shaded by well-grown oaks, and irrigated by fresh and transparent rills, present a more than common degree of attraction.

The tavern where I had left the carriage, and which bore the name of Sepino, though four miles distant from it, is a lonely building, sufficiently spacious to afford accommodation to travellers; but has, naturally enough, acquired a bad name through the misdeeds of one of its occupiers some years back.

This man, who had been at considerable

expense to fit it up with such conveniences as rendered it superior to all the other resting-places on the same road, had imagined to make his guests pay for these luxuries, not only by the ostensible charges he made as innkeeper, but by robbing them, through the means of emissaries of his own, at a short distance in advance of his residence, after they quitted it early in the morning.

This practice had been carried on for some time without suspicion or detection, when a scheme of improvement in his habitual mode of depredation brought his iniquity to light. A lady of some rank, who was journeying from Campobasso to Naples, carrying with her a considerable sum of money, stopped at this tavern for a night, for the purpose of not exposing herself to the chance of robbery after dusk; and the master of the house prevailed upon her to deposit the specie in a cupboard, or press, in the wall of his own room, as the safest receptacle for the night, requesting her to keep the key of it. Before morning, a gang of banditti burst into the house, bound the master hand and foot, broke open the cupboard, and

departed with the money-bags. In the general alarm and confusion caused by this occurrence, one of the lady's servants preserved sufficient presence of mind to observe, assisted by the light of the moon, from a window under which the depredators passed while departing with their booty, that two of them bore a strong resemblance to some men he had seen in the kitchen during the earlier part of the evening; and his mistress, having been made acquainted with this after she had quitted the spot on the following day, obtained assistance from the next station of gendarmerie, and returned unexpectedly to the tavern, where the master was found dividing the spoil with his agents, among whom the two principal were his own sons, and was with them seized, and in course of time suffered the punishment due to his crimes.

At some distance beyond Sepino, or rather the fore-mentioned tavern, the road ascends a long and tiresome hill, quitting the valley of the Tamaro altogether, and, on the other side of it, the village of Cerza Maggiore and Cerza Piccola, near which this river takes its source.

The country then changes to an undulated tract, little remarkable for either fertility or picturesque beauty.

The well-built village of S. Giuliano is placed in an agreeable situation; and, soon after passing it, a road of recent construction, leading to the town of Bojano, branches off to the left at a very abrupt angle.

The main track winds for some miles through a series of hills so barren and repulsive to the eye, that I could fancy myself among the clay mountains of Basilicata.

The approach to the city of Campobasso is somewhat improved by some patches of oaks; but the first aspect of the town is by no means equal to the notion one is apt to form of the populous capital of a province. The principal access to it is through a suburb, composed of buildings erected within the last six years on an extensive flat; the level surface of which, as well as the greater regularity of the houses, and their style of architecture, confer upon it a much more attractive character than that retained by the city itself, which is afterwards entered by a gateway, leading into a narrow,

dark, and dirty street. In the former quarter are situated the cathedral, of a simple and dignified style of architecture; the barracks, prisons, a college, and several other public establishments. Here also I found the inn, which became my residence; and in which, though of considerable magnitude, I found some difficulty to obtain accommodation.

It was far beyond mediocrity, and I remarked with surprise that it is the only town in the kingdom possessing an establishment of the kind which has evidently been constructed for no other purpose than public accommodation. The number of rooms, the manner in which they are rated according to their respective merits, a tariff relative to the meals and wines which are offered to the traveller, and a variety of other convenient regulations, show that the concourse of strangers is frequent, if not habitual, in the town of Campobasso.

It is reckoned to contain about nine thousand inhabitants, a population apparently numerous in proportion to the limited surface it occupies. They seem industrious and well-disposed: at the same time, the local position

of Campobasso is not such as to account satisfactorily and clearly for the comparative degree of importance it has attained, being to all appearance but indifferently situated for carrying on any internal branch of commerce; for, except the high road to Naples, it is provided with no direct or efficient means of communication with the rest of the kingdom, and the coast of the Adriatic. A road originally intended to secure this last advantage, by communicating with the little port of Termoli on that sea, has hitherto been carried no farther than fourteen miles beyond Campobasso, in the direction of Larino, a town on the edge of the flat country of Capitanata, the representative of the ancient Larinum, of which some extensive and well preserved ruins of Roman form point out the site.

Campobasso is, nevertheless, considered the entrepôt of all the corn-trade between the capital and the provinces of Apulia and Abruzzo Citra; and this circumstance has, above all others, contributed to the prosperity it has enjoyed for some years back.

It is, moreover, celebrated throughout the

kingdom for its manufactures of cutlery, which I expected to have been pointed out as the principal objects of public attention and curiosity. Great was my surprise, therefore, at finding that the various articles of that nature, which are so abundantly disseminated for sale throughout every portion of the realm, are all fabricated in detached small workshops, containing little more than a common blacksmith's apparatus, and possessing so contracted an assortment of articles, that I could with difficulty obtain a selection of a dozen knives and scissors. They all work by commission for dealers in the metropolis and other large towns, with such limited means and capital, that they are entirely incapacitated from executing and maintaining in their laboratories a collection exhibiting anything like variety or choice.

The absence of all mechanical assistance, and the want of efficient instruments and tools to abridge and perfect their labours, renders their final result a matter of surprise and even wonder, and reflects considerable credit on the skill and perseverance of the individuals who follow this profession. It is but justice to add, that the

implements of husbandry they fabricate are good and cheap; but those which aim at a higher degree of execution or refinement are dear when compared with similar articles of British manufacture.

CHAPTER II.

Campobasso.—Paintings in the Churches.—Produce of the Country.—Theatre.—An unsuccessful Prima Donna.—Derivation of Molise.—Nicolo Monforte, Count of Campobasso.—City of Agnone.—Vinchiaturo.—The Matese.—The ancient Bovianum.—Bojano.—Its depopulation.—Climate.—Passage over the Matese.—A bridal cavalcade.—Telese.—Sulphureous stream.—The ancient Telesia.—Casale.—L'Amoroso.

THE origin of Campobasso is not of remote date, and it is placed on the abrupt declivity of an isolated hill, the upper extremity of which was occupied by a feudal castle of considerable dimensions, its ruins still covering a large space of ground.

The streets that lead to this edifice are dark, narrow, and filthy in the extreme; and, though tolerably well paved, inaccessible to carriages and even horses, not merely from their steepness, but from the frequent recurrence of flights of steps at regular intervals of distance.

The city is not walled, but all the exterior buildings join one another, having but few doors outwardly, so as to form a continued rampart of walls of no inconsiderable strength. The line of this bulwark is broken by five several gateways, each still provided with an ancient tower. The best houses are placed in this position, possessing, besides the advantage of a more commodious interior access, windows that look over the surrounding open country.

The churches, except the cathedral already mentioned, are all mean and small, and only one of them advances any claims to notice: this is dedicated to Sant' Antonio Abbate, and contains several very good paintings; one of which in particular, representing St. Benedict exorcising a monk, is of very superior execution. The author of these works is unknown, but tradition records him as having executed them while enjoying refuge in this town from temporary pursuit or persecution, and Guercino has been named as the painter. I am not aware of any part of his life according with a similar circumstance, but the manner and colouring have much affinity with his.

Another church, belonging to a monastery of Capuchins, about half a mile to the east of Campobasso, contains a curious painting representing the reconciliation of two factions, which for a lapse of many years had, after the fashion of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, distracted the peace of the city by the constant recurrence of sanguinary feuds. They bore the names of *Guisci* and *Cavagni*, derived probably from families so called; and, in the year 1588, were finally induced to bury their animosity in eternal oblivion, through the friendly interference of a friar of that order. As a work of art the record has little merit, but there is much truth in the countenances, which were mostly portraits; and the church where the ceremony occurred with all the solemnity of a religious rite, has acquired the appropriate name, which it retains to this day, of S. Maria della Pace.

The atmosphere of Campobasso is accounted healthy, and the environs are free from malaria; but the climate is variable, and very cold in winter. Corn is the principal produce of the immediate vicinity of the city; but there is a sufficiency of oil and wine in other parts of the

province to supply its own wants. The latter, however, is far from good, the grapes being gathered in an unripe state, to escape the early frosts, and the juice is boiled to soften its asperity and render it susceptible of preservation: the result of this operation is what is termed *vino cotto;* a beverage scarcely to be endured by palates unused to it, and but slightly partaking of the generous and salutary qualities of wine in general.

The town is furnished with a public walk honoured by the title of Botanical Garden, the vegetables of which speak but unfavourably for the nature of the soil and temperature; which, however, are not uncongenial to the growth of northern fruits, among which are numbered above seventy different sorts of apples and pears.

The surface of the country is as little adapted to picturesque scenery as the soil is suited to advantageous cultivation, and the general aspect of the scenery is dull and dreary. The village of Ferrazzano, about a mile from Campobasso, in a more elevated situation, has, however, something striking in its exterior appear-

ance; and those of Pietracatella, Montagano, and Oratino, placed at no very great distance, show that the district is not deficient in population.

Campobasso possesses a theatre, much too small for the number of its inhabitants, and probably the more frequented on that account by a population who seem to take particular delight in the amusement it affords. The period of my arrival was one of peculiar excitement, caused by the failure of a *prima donna*, and the high expectations raised by the debut of her successor, whose appearance was looked to with general impatience and anxiety by the public, but who had not yet arrived from the capital. My carriage had not unfrequently been stopped, as I drew nearer to Campobasso, by several respectable persons, to inquire if it contained this important individual; and once by the criminal judge, whose duties called him to some distance for the purpose of investigating the circumstances of a recent highway robbery, who most peremptorily stopped my progress, and, very unceremoniously, as I thought, put his head into the vehicle without

previous inquiry, and said, "Dov' è la prima donna?" It was with reluctance that he received my assurances that I was not the personage he sought, and could give no tidings of her; but she was expected from Naples that day, and actually to sing in the evening, having been sent for express by the municipal powers to supply the place of a performer who, though young, and preceded by the laudatory voice of fame, failed in the principal requisite of her profession, namely, an organ that could be heard even in the limited precincts of the theatre of Campobasso. This deficiency had even been admitted by her own avowal, though attributed to local indisposition, and temporarily relieved by the talents and intelligence of a secondary performer for a few nights.

Of all this I was subsequently informed after I was established in the inn, where my approach had excited the same exhibition of eager expectations, and subsequent disappointment, as on the road.

The voiceless heroine was actually occupying this very residence, and waiting the arrival of

her more fortunate successor, (to avail herself of the return of the vehicle which should bring her,) with becoming resignation and even cheerfulness, if I may judge by the incessant roulades, cadences, and volatas in which she indulged at intervals, and which kept me awake during the first part of the night, which she had devoted to a farewell supper to her operatic companions, and led me to fear that a Campobasso audience must be afflicted with incurable deafness. The final appearance of the long wished for *prima donna* on the second day, the punctilio observed on either side as to which of the *virtuosas* was entitled to the first visit from the other, and lastly, the departure of the unsuccessful songstress on the third, were circumstances, attended as they were with local and characteristic details, which forcibly recalled to one's recollection the amusing scenes in Goldoni's *Ballerina*.

The last of these was perhaps the most effective to an impartial spectator, when the discarded artist, who was both young and pretty, appeared at the door, clad in plaid silk of most brilliant hues, with a black velvet travel-

ling-cap and gold tassel, over ringlets disposed of in the picturesque but formal manner peculiar to the coiffure of the middle ages. On her left hand rested a grey parrot; the right, thrust through the steel chain of a weighty embroidered reticule, rested moreover on the arm of a gentleman of substantial attire and mature age, whom she frequently addressed as *Signor Barone,* and whose attentions, joined to those of a retinue of younger but equally respectable attendants, proved that, however unfortunate the lady had been in securing the applause of the public, her merits had been more successful in the attractions of private society.

Her professional companions were likewise present at this interesting juncture, and formed a second group round her at the carriage-door, where she waited some time while sundry packages of wondrous dimensions were placed, or rather forced into the vehicle; one of which, as she assured the baron, contained thirty-two white calico curtains. Then another tedious interval elapsed, during which the lady's mother, who, as she somewhat pettishly remarked, *si fa sempre aspettare,* was paying,

or rather disputing, the amount of the landlord's bill, and sweeping up into a basket all the remaining items inseparable from a dramatic establishment. Mamma, after being heard for a long while, appeared at last, assisted by the footboy or *giacchetto,* the materials of whose travelling-cap, as well as the border of the matron's petticoat, bore testimony of identity with those of the young lady's attire, and did honour to her munificent disposition. Nothing now seemed likely to cause farther delays to the departure, except the introduction of a hamper containing a greyhound mother and a litter of puppies, a cage with another parrot, a second with some canary-birds, and lastly, another hamper containing an heterogeneous mass of ingeniously packed provisions, the fundamental elements of which shone conspicuous in the form of Bologna sausages, pomegranates, and tallow candles.

The ladies were ushered into the carriage at last, not without considerable exertions on their own part and that of their suite; the *giacchetto* mounted the seat, and perched himself on an indescribable amalgamation of band-

boxes and small parcels; the coachman uttered a volley of those reproachful sounds which, in these countries, prove the only successful stimulants to unwilling or jaded horses. The ladies waved embroidered handkerchiefs in sympathetic accord with the exaltation of all the hats belonging to their friends; the bare-legged urchin, usually denominated *quaglione*, banged the door of the vehicle to with a thundering crash, which effectually drowned an involuntary and painful exclamation of the baron, whose fingers narrowly escaped forcible incarceration in the hinge-joint; the bipeds and quadrupeds set up a loud yell, and the ponderous equipage was dragged off at full gallop, in a cloud of dust, amidst the vociferations of the lower orders, which, though qualified by some allusions (to me incomprehensible) with regard to parrots and pigeons, must, upon the whole, have been considered as complimentary to the travellers.

The province of Molise, comprising the principal part of the ancient Samnium, derives its modern appellation, not from a small town of that name about ten miles from Campobasso,

but from one of the Norman families settled in the kingdom at different periods of immigration after the first conquest by Robert Guiscard.

The adjunct of De Molise, or De Moulins, is by no means of rare occurrence among the companions of William the Conqueror, and it is probable that Normandy possessed more than one branch of the family who bore it. It appears that a certain Hugo de Molisiis had, in the twelfth century, become possessed (probably by a sovereign grant) of almost the whole of Samnium, and his descendants retained to a much later period several of the principal fiefs which composed it; among which, Campobasso, though of comparatively modern origin, had already attained a primary importance. By marriage it passed into the house of Gambatesa, and subsequently into a branch of that of Monforte, descendants of the renowned Simon de Montfort, the exterminator of the Albigenses, and of his no less celebrated son, better known in British history as the Earl of Leicester, whose children and relatives accompanied Charles of Anjou in his successful expedition against Manfred of Stauffen.

This restless and ambitious family continued to possess, as Counts of Campobasso, large domains in this province, and exerted such extended influence throughout the realm as to render them the objects of the alternate protection and jealousy of its sovereigns.

Nicola, or Cola, Monforte, the last who bore the title under the Aragonese dynasty, appears foremost in the ranks of the formidable phalanx of unruly vassals who, by lending their assistance to the princes of the second line of Anjou, and securing that of the reigning Pontiff, threatened the overthrow and destruction of Ferdinand I. The efforts of this association of influential and warlike feudatories offer, in their continued and uncertain course, one of the most singular narratives presented by the History of the Neapolitan dominions during the middle ages, and have been recorded more concisely in a work entitled "Congiura de Baroni," by Porzio, a native writer.

The names of the Princes of Salerno, Bisignano, Venosa, and Melfi, those of the Duke of Sessa, the Counts of Campobasso, Sarno, and other powerful noblemen, were arrayed against

the tyranny of their liege lord; but their mutual jealousies, divisions, and want of good faith, finally undermined the cause they had undertaken and upheld for a length of years, and the king's energy and superior cunning triumphed over their machinations.

Most of the leaders suffered death or exile; others were thrown into captivity, and their domains confiscated. The Count of Campobasso's name stood so high during the successful part of his career, that he assumed the power of stamping coins with his name and arms, some of which are still extant. After his flight from his native land, and the sequestration of his property as a rebellious subject, the military fame he had acquired secured him a post of high importance in the armies, first of the Duke of Lorraine, and afterwards of Charles the Bold of Burgundy. Tradition has branded him, however, with the stain of treachery, in consequence of a reproof (some say a blow) received from his new master, whose defeat and death at the battle of Nanci have always been attributed to the defection of the Count of Campobasso.

His son succeeded afterwards in recovering the favour of his legitimate sovereigns, and was reinstated in his hereditary estates and honours; but, having taken part with the French in the expedition of Charles VIII, he was finally banished from Naples, and died in obscurity; leaving two sons, from the eldest of whom, Antonello, descended a second line of Monfortes, who, deprived of their ancestral titles and possessions, were said to exist in the town of Nola till about the middle of the last century.

There are other cities in the province of Molise, which, as episcopal sees, claim the next rank to Campobasso; but that which, in point of population, commerce, and consequently affluence, has the fairest right to such a distinction, is one called Agnone, containing more than seven thousand inhabitants and several manufactories. It is, nevertheless, but little known; being situated in a mountainous district, remote from any high road, and having but very indirect communications with that of the Abruzzi at Castel di Sangro. There is a project in contemplation to establish a road between Campobasso and Agnone, and to carry it on to

Castel di Sangro, which would be a much nearer line of communication than that now executing by Bojano to Isernia, of which I shall give some account.

Leaving Campobasso shortly after the departure of the *virtuosa*, I resumed my way towards the capital; but diverged from its main course, about eight miles farther, to go to Bojano, situated five miles from the turning. This is the track lately constructed for carriages, to open the communication between Campobasso and Isernia, on the great road from the capital to Abruzzo, for the mutual advantage of the contiguous provinces of Molise and Capitanata.

The face of the country is soon much improved by large patches of forest scenery scattered irregularly over it.

The village of Vinchiaturo, pleasantly situated amidst verdant meadows, plentifully watered and shaded by large trees, is discovered shortly afterwards, and the road is carried through it. Its aspect is flourishing and cleanly, in consequence of recent construction and restoration; its original representative, of much more considerable extent, having been entirely destroyed

in the earthquake of the year 1805, which so peculiarly devastated this province.

A winding descent leads to a long and chilly-looking valley, entirely cultivated with wheat, through which several streams that have their springs in the Matese are seen winding till they join the Biferno, which rises close to Bojano. One of these, called Il Rio, rushes from a deep ravine under the little town of Guardia Regia, which, as well as two others, Campochiaro and Santo Polo, are placed on lower eminences branching out from the larger mass of the mountain, the northern flank of which stretches along the whole of the vale of Bojano. Its aspect, on this side, is as impressive as gloomy: dark and yawning recesses, extending apparently into the bowels of the mountain, protrude huge buttresses of naked rock into the flat; while these narrow glens are thickly clothed with impenetrable thickets, which appear to climb up the higher fissures as far as the most elevated point, called Monte Miletto, rising above Piedimonte to the south, and overlooking Bojano in the opposite direction.

I arrived at this last place quite early enough

to visit all that remains of its ancient importance and magnitude, now limited to several portions of polygonal walls, which are of somewhat difficult access, the modern buildings having been constructed above them. The only fragments of this kind within the town are near to each other, though in different parallels; one in a dry well, another in a cellar of the same house, and the third in the court of an adjoining habitation. As specimens of that particular mode of construction, they are remarkable; being composed of very large blocks closely united, with the smaller interstices filled up with singular exactness and even nicety.

These stupendous labours, of which other relics are to be seen along the lower region of the mountain above the scattered habitations of the modern town, are calculated to impress the observer with a notion of the superior strength of the fortifications of the ancient Bovianum. It is, therefore, not surprising to find Livy allude to it as bearing the rank of metropolis, among the four principal cities belonging to the district of the Samnites Pentri.

The reputation which it had likewise acquired, of being the most opulent, might probably awaken the cupidity of the Roman invaders; and, in the successive contests between these and the natives, its occupation was ever considered an achievement of such vital importance, if not absolute necessity, that the utmost efforts of their military skill and power were combined to overcome the resistance opposed by its triple line of fortifications.

In the Social War it became the last asylum of the different nations that had united to resist the unbending system of aggrandizement and usurpation which characterized the policy of the Roman Republic.

After their defeat and expulsion from Corfinium, and subsequently from Æsernia, the allied forces established their head-quarters at Bovianum, and illustrated it by the ultimate ineffectual struggle they maintained against their foes. It finally became a Roman colony; but neither under that form, nor, later, as a Christian episcopal see, did it ever recover any vestige of its ancient splendour or importance. Pliny, indeed, mentions it as if divided into

two portions bearing the same appellation; but Strabo clearly says, that neither Bovianum, Venafrum, Telesia, nor Æsernia, could in his days be ranked as cities.

In the year 642, Alzecus, the leader of a horde of Bulgarians, came over to this part of Italy, and obtained in grant from Romuald, Duke of Benevento, the territories of Bovianum, Sepianum, and Æsernia, under the jurisdiction of a Castaldate, a species of military fief established by the Lombards. As such it continued to exist until the invasion of the Normans, when, as has already been observed, it became more distinctly the property of the family of Molise, who bore the title of Counts of Bojano previous to that of Campobasso.

The unproductive quality of its soil, and the peculiarity of its local situation, under a steep mountain of such elevation as to deprive it of the influence of the sun for several months in the year, might tend to the continuance of the state of depopulation to which it had been reduced; but the frequent and devastating physical convulsions to which its territory has been subjected, have probably exerted a still

more pernicious effect. In 853, one of these commotions converted nearly the whole of the valley into a lake, and destroyed a great portion of what remained of the city. The former was drained off in the course of time by the workings of nature; but not a century has elapsed without some fresh calamity arising from similar causes, namely, the frequent recurrence of earthquakes, which have more particularly ravaged the base of the Matese.

It is singular enough that a mountain of such magnitude, and in such a position, should not be noticed by any of the ancient geographers or historians in a more specific manner. So complete has been this omission, that the investigators of ancient topography are compelled to look upon the name of Tifernus, which is twice alluded to by Livy apparently only as a very inconsiderable part of the Matese, as having been the denomination likewise conferred on its whole extension.

The same appellation was also given by the ancients to a Samnite town, and to the river now called Biferno, which rises from several clear and chilly springs close to the modern

Bojano. In this spot it abounds in excellent small trout; and, after a winding course of about forty miles, discharges itself into the Adriatic near Termoli. The flat surface which it irrigates near Bojano is thereby maintained in such a swampy state as not only to be very unproductive, but to impregnate the atmosphere with a degree of dampness which prevails at all seasons of the year, and manifests itself by repeated and lasting fogs. The climate is therefore far from genial: but the absence of a corresponding proportion of heat, which in these latitudes usually confers fertility on a marshy soil, has probably likewise prevented the generation of accompanying malaria; for, notwithstanding the coldness and humidity of climate for which Bojano is proverbial, its inhabitants, amounting to little more than fifteen hundred, are said to enjoy excellent health, and offer not unfrequent examples of longevity.

The bishop, for it is an episcopal see, resides at Campobasso, and the place itself has a poor and depopulated aspect. Several Latin inscriptions, and some fragments of indifferent sculpture, grace the modern cathedral; an edifice,

the simplicity of which amounts to meanness. —It may seem strange, after this description, to add, that the situation of Bojano is not destitute of picturesque beauty; but as such it struck me, perhaps from the contrast with Campobasso; and when I viewed the serrated peaks of the towering Matese, the magnificent forests that stretch along its indented and precipitous flanks, and the transparent rills that issue from its roots and meander over a surface of verdure such as is never seen in the summer of the South, I felt that the landscape had an original character which was not without considerable attractions.

The little town of Colle d'Anchise, containing three thousand inhabitants, is situated on the opposite range across the valley, and forms a pleasing object.

The road leading from the main track was finished as far as Cantalupo, about four miles beyond Bojano, in the direction of Isernia; to which, nevertheless, it is possible to go in a carriage during the summer months. It was expected that a year would suffice to bring it to completion, which has since been effected.

Rugged and impracticable as the passage over the highest extremities of the Matese may seem, it is in use at almost every season of the year by the natives of the south and northern sides of the mountain, who drive their beasts of burden, laden with various articles of commerce or produce, close to the most elevated of its pinnacles. The ascent from Piedimonte to that point which it is requisite to pass, does not employ more than five hours; and much less is required to descend into the valley of Bojano, to which there are three different paths; so that the saving of time and expense secured by this communication must ensure the continuation of the practice.

The height of the Matese is estimated at 9700 Neapolitan palms, about 2300 less than that of the Gran Sasso; and its circumference reckoned to measure seventy miles. The view from its summit, when favoured by a clear atmosphere and serene weather, (circumstances of rare occurrence,) is extremely extensive; embracing both seas, and, it is said, occasionally the coast of Dalmatia beyond the Adriatic.

It seemed as if my excursion to Campobasso

and Samnium was destined to be illustrated by a train of occurrences characteristic of some peculiarities of habit and manners in the middle classes, which were perhaps more amusing than instructive.

I had scarcely regained the high road to the capital, when my carriage overtook and passed a numerous and joyful party of horsemen, whose miscellaneous aspect, as well as the varieties exhibited in the animals that bore them, could not but attract attention and curiosity. My surmises as to their different callings, and the object of their peregrination, were satisfied at the tavern where I baited at mid-day; and they shortly joined me, likewise to rest for some time.

I then learnt that they mostly belonged, in unequal capacities, to the establishment of the criminal tribunal at Campobasso; the Cancelliere, or principal clerk of which, had (like many individuals of more illustrious rank) recently been married by proxy at Naples, the duties of his station not allowing him leisure for a journey thither, even upon so important an occasion. All the persons employed in the

same department had been anxious to testify their respect to the bridegroom,(who was past the bloom of youth,) and had offered their services in accompanying him to meet his spouse, who was to sleep that night at Guardia delle Sole, on her way from the capital and her native home. But, unfortunately, the principal personage had, very early in the morning, and just as he was preparing to mount a horse kindly lent to him by the president of the supreme court, been assailed by a complaint, assuredly most ill-timed, which, though variously and forcibly described by his sympathising companions, could evidently in every language be designated by a very technical though ordinary appellation.

This indisposition, which, they added, could prove of no very extended duration, was nevertheless so inconvenient as well as painful, as entirely to preclude the possibility of his attempting the intended expedition that day; and his friends, being all ready to attend him, volunteered proceeding in the form of a deputation, invested with his direct sanction, to receive the bride, alleviate the shock of dis-

appointment and alarm by a succinct and reassuring statement of its causes, and escort her with all due honour on the following day to the capital of Samnium and the abode of her expecting consort. All this was related to me by the person who appeared to take the lead in the embassy, and who was, as I learnt from some of the subalterns, one of the principal jailors. They ordered a substantial repast of maccaroni and eggs; after which it had been determined to resume their progress, to anticipate, if possible, the arrival of the bride at Guardia.

Whether the malady which had so *mal-à-propos* inflicted itself on the Cancelliere was tainted with some contagious influence, or the fatigues of the journey operated in a morbid manner on persons unused to such undertakings, or the refreshments they had perhaps indulged in too luxuriously had something deleterious in their composition, it is difficult to verify; but almost the whole party, before I quitted the tavern, declared themselves severally incompetent to continue their route, from the same causes which had afflicted their worthy

colleague. After offering all the advice and recipes which my limited experience in pharmacy afforded, I left them with a promise to execute to the best of my power the painful task of submitting these untoward events to the consideration of the disappointed bride. I was, however, spared this unpleasant commission in the sequel; for, having reached Guardia early enough to provide a comfortable meal, and to rest myself till the cool of the day, I had the satisfaction of seeing the entire cavalcade enter the little town, apparently completely recovered from their indisposition, and repair to a private house destined to receive the lady for the night whenever she might arrive.

Shortly after this, I walked out on the high road in the direction of the capital, and it fell to my lot to be the first to catch a glimpse of this interesting person, who, it seems, had left her father and mother in the carriage which had brought them from Naples, resting under the influence of slumbers so potent as to defy the repeated shocks occasioned by the forcible contact into which their corpulencies were rudely brought by the joltings of a newly gravelled road.

The young lady had preferred another mode of travelling, and was mounted on a little Calabrian pony which had carried the servant boy, now promoted to a seat by the driver; and under that form, (rather unexpected, all circumstances considered,) I first beheld her, preceding the vehicle by about two hundred yards, and apparently not embarrassed to adapt her attire (albeit unsuited to such an undertaking) to the peculiar mode of horsemanship she had selected, which did not admit the advantage of a side-saddle. A pair of nankeen trousers, tied at the ankles with blue ribbon over striped jean half-boots, must however have proved the most commodious, as they were the most conspicuous, portion of her costume; the remainder of which was disposed after a fashion more convenient than graceful. The body of her upper garment was of shot silk, *couleur gorge de pigeon*, surmounted by gigot sleeves of white starched muslin of considerable dimensions; and her countenance, by no means unattractive, was shaded by a Leghorn bonnet and artificial flowers: the hand that held the reins bore also a scarlet umbrella;

and the other brandished a large green fan, which was occasionally used as a whip. Her general appearance did not seem to produce so peculiar an impression on the natives of Guardia as it had done on me. I followed her and her respectable parents into the town; and had the additional felicity of seeing the latter carefully slung out of their carriage, and the bride gallantly lifted off her horse by the members of the deputation, who all kissed her hand, and, as far as I could make out, carried the trio up the staircase amidst expressions of mixed regret and congratulation.

It was satisfactory to learn that the whole party quitted the place at daybreak the following morning for Campobasso, with no greater inconvenience than the prolonged journey of the father and mother thus far to place her in the keeping of her husband. I likewise had resumed the course of my journey, but, previous to crossing the ferry under Solipaca, deviated from the high road to examine the ruins of Telesia, a city of some note, belonging to the Samnites Caudini, afterwards a Roman colony, and still bearing, in its present state of depopu-

lation and devastation, the dignity and title of an episcopal see.

After following for about two miles the line of a bad swampy road, running parallel with that of the Calore, I found myself in a row of wretched hovels, which constitute all the existing habitations of the present city, situated about a mile from the ancient one. These are not unpleasantly situated on a gentle slope of richly cultivated and wooded ground, rising insensibly from the bank of the river; a view of which it commands, backed by the dark forests of Taburnus.

The ruined church, which was once, and is still called, the cathedral, exhibits a number of Latin inscriptions upon its walls, and some fragments of architectural sculpture of very superior execution. These were probably conveyed from the site of the ancient city to this, its Christian representative.

Not far from this edifice stands the only ruin which is remarkable in point of construction, and which the peasants call a castle. It probably was a sepulchre; its form being that of a truncated cone, faced with large square blocks

of grey lime-stone, and vaulted in the interior.

The spot occupied by these remains and the huts above-mentioned, is copiously watered by various branches of a sulphureous stream rising from abundant springs at a short distance, in the direction of the Matese. It emits a very powerful and nauseous odour, to which is attributed the existence of the malaria which pervades the whole district. But this calamity is more probably derived from a marsh, formed by other springs that ooze from the soil just behind the present village in a kind of basin, the bottom of which is lower than the position of the habitations, so that a great portion of these waters are in a continual state of stagnation, producing an immense crop of rushes and reeds, which, in their annual fall and reproduction, add the baneful effects of their pestilential exhalations to those of the putrid pool.

The tradition of the natives reckons, with these causes of insalubrity, others still more fatal, in the form of gaseous vapours that issue from the earth in various places, and, like those of the Grotto del Cane and Lake of Amsanctus,

are powerful enough to kill birds, reptiles, and animals.

A pond of very limited dimensions is honoured with the name of Lake of Telese: its waters, fringed by large elms, have a pleasing aspect of depth, transparency, and freshness, and are said to produce very large tench and eels.

The site of the ancient city is about a mile to the north-west of the cathedral, and is easily identified by the line of its walls of *opus reticulatum*, of octagonal shape, unbroken in its extension of a mile and a half, and in many parts preserved to its original height; the gateways have fallen in, but their position is marked by square towers on both sides of each. The space inclosed within these walls is now entirely given up to cultivation, but several heaps of bricks attest the existence of large edifices; and on the outside, at no great distance, may be traced the vestiges of a circus, and some more indistinct relics pointed out as those of a theatre.

Several ancient authors mention this city as one of the principal among those of the Samnites, and it is likewise recorded in the Itineraries as being in the line of the Via Latina.

During the successive contests which illustrated the nation to which it belonged, it acquired considerable renown from having at different periods given birth to two celebrated generals, each bearing the name of Pontius: the first commanded the army which subjected the Romans to the disgraceful defeat in the Caudine Forks; and the second, at the head of seventy thousand men, in the Social War, approached so near to Rome as to threaten it with the worst of perils. In the dark ages it produced a writer, known as Alexander, Abbas Telesinus, whose chronicle of the deeds of Roger the First is referred to with confidence by modern historians.

I had proposed, under our coachman's guidance, to have proceeded along the banks of the river as far as the next ferry, which was to replace us in the high road; but the track we followed to effect this became gradually so much less practicable, that, after some progress, we preferred following a smoother but more circuitous path to a village called Casale di S. Salvadore, situated on a higher level at the foot of the Matese, through which we went,

over a pavement that threatened destruction to our vehicle.

This village, situated at the immediate base of one of the projections of the mountain, picturesquely crowned by the ruins of a castle of considerable strength and size, presented in its interior aspect one of those anomalous spectacles which are not of unfrequent occurrence in these realms. It consisted but of two streets containing probably little more than two hundred inhabitants, but these bore an appearance of ease and activity for which it was difficult to account. Here existed a spot surrounded on three sides by a belt of malaria, backed by precipitous and inaccessible mountains on the fourth, cut off from the more populous and healthy parts of the province by two rivers and a swamp, through which all communication is nearly intercepted during half the year: yet it contained an industrious and comparatively affluent population, several coffee-houses, a theatre, and many houses of superior architecture, with extensive gardens laid out in a good, though perhaps antiquated taste, and adorned with marble fountains, vases, and statues.

From Casale we changed our direction, turning again towards the river, and reached it after going through another village, called L'Amoroso, which, though larger than the former, by no means presented so satisfactory a picture. It is placed very near the sharp angle formed by the confluence of the Calore and Voltorno. The immediate banks of the former, and indeed the whole range from Telese to Casale and L'Amoroso, bear the most unequivocal marks of volcanic operations; but the structure of the Matese in the same line of extension is entirely calcareous.

A ferry called Del Torricello, placed half a mile from the last village, carried us over the Calore; and a hundred yards more brought us into the high road, a little way beyond the turning to Solipaca. From this I returned back to Naples the same way I had come, and completed an excursion which, in its limited extension, comprised many objects of interest and attraction.

EXCURSION

INTO THE PROVINCES OF

PRINCIPATO CITRA AND ULTRA,

BASILICATA, TERRA DI BARI,

AND CAPITANATA.

EXCURSION

INTO

PRINCIPATO CITRA AND ULTRA,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

Passes through the Apennines.—Excursion to Nola by Sarno. —Scafati.— The Virgin of the Baths.— Sarno.—Military contests. — Roman Aqueduct. — Palma.—Nola.— Pass of Monteforte.— Fountain. — Village of Monteforte.— Family of De Montfort. — Snow-pits. — Avellino. — The ancient Abellinum. — Monastery of Monte Vergine.— Montefuscolo and Montemiletto. — Eilanum. — Grotta Minarda. — View from Frigento.— The Pool of Amsanctus.

THE first station I had in view on quitting Castellamare, in the autumn of the year 1829, was the town of Avellino; and, to attain it, several roads, or rather tracks, were open to my choice, by either of which I might reach the foot of that branch of the Apennines which surrounds the plain of Naples, the valleys and passes of which are open to a traveller's progress in many more spots than he is aware of, on a transient survey of the apparently formidable impediments that encircle this province.

The short and very practicable causeway cut through the tufa near S. Agata, on the Roman road, may perhaps not deserve to be numbered among these outlets; but there are two others, likewise in a northern direction, behind Capua and Caserta, which, though equally accessible, are little known to the common class of travellers, and break most unexpectedly on any observer whose eye follows the naked and fantastic peaks of Mount Tifati, and sees no opening through the steep and weather-beaten flanks of that dreary range. These two defiles, leading at no great distance from the above-mentioned towns to the plain of Cajazzo, are described in another portion of this work; and I shall therefore point out a third, perforating the line of hills behind the town of Maddaloni, and probably more familiar to the casual visitor as conducting to the celebrated aqueduct built by Charles III. The continuation of this road leads to Campobasso, the capital of the province of Molise.

At Arienzo, another defile, more worthy of this denomination from its form and extension, forms the communication between that town

and the villages of Arpaja and Montesarchio; and has, by the majority of antiquaries, been regarded as the celebrated Caudine Forks.

Following the base of the Apennines, which now draw nearer to that of Vesuvius, Nola and many other towns are seen placed at the commencement of a fifth and much more formidable pass, which is that of Monteforte, leading to Avellino and all the eastern districts of the kingdom: this, from its length, steepness, and winding course, is perhaps the only important one in a military point of view. After this, no carriage-road is constructed through any break of the mountains till beyond Nocera, when one, little used or known by foreigners, runs through an open valley to S. Severino, and, having from thence a communication to the right with Salerno, once formed the principal, if not the only line of connexion between that city and the capital. The newer road by La Cava, being much shorter and more beautiful, has very naturally superseded the use of that by S. Severino; but though, strictly speaking, it may be looked upon as a mountain pass, I am unwilling to place it on the same rank

as the above-mentioned tracks, from the circumstance of its not forming a link with an interior valley, like most of the others.

The reader will pardon this digression from my journey at its very outset, and accompany my progress to Nola by the way of Sarno: which I offer to his attention in preference to the less circuitous, but more monotonous track through the sandy vineyards that extend between the roots of Vesuvius and the foot of the Apennines. To gain access to either, the high road must be re-entered near Pompeii, and followed as far as Scafati; to which place, however, another leads from Castellamare, through the little town of Angri, under Mount Lactarius. At Scafati the Sarno is crossed near a picturesque church and shrine of the Virgin of the Baths, whose festival is celebrated by her votaries plunging in crowds into the river; a ceremony which the season renders far from unpleasant.

Should the traveller be inclined to follow the shortest direction to Palma, and avoid Sarno, he will turn off suddenly to the left before the bridge of Scafati, and by keeping

along a succession of deep sandy lanes, communicating with and intersecting each other in rather a puzzling manner, he will finally reach the object of his journey, after passing through the large well-built village of Poggio Marino.

The road I took, which is excellent, quits the main track at an abrupt angle, likewise to the left, some way beyond Scafati; and winds through a flat but rich and well-cultivated country, by the villages of San Marzano and San Valentino; which last is remarkable from a church with several small cupolas clustered together, bearing the unusual, but highly picturesque appearance of an eastern mosque.

Sarno is a well-built and flourishing town of ten thousand inhabitants, sufficiently elevated above the level of the plain to enjoy an uninterrupted view over the whole of its surface as far as the sea. A street of great extent stretches along the foot of the mountain, whose parched and sunburnt sides denote the effects of a southern aspect and summer sun. This exposition, and the effluvia from the adjoining flat, combine to render it as a place of residence unfa-

vourable, if not absolutely unhealthy, during the hot months.

The river Sarno is formed by three distinct springs, one of which rises a little way beyond the town on the road to Nocera; the second gushes from a rock under a ruined tower in the centre of the town, and supplies all its wants; but the third and most copious has its origin at about a mile to the west of Sarno, where it oozes from the limestone rock, through no visible aperture, in great abundance and transparency, but, as it is immediately dammed up, and divided into several channels, much of the picturesque beauty usually adherent to similar scenes is destroyed. The spot is, moreover, devoid of trees; nor do the ruins of a monastery of considerable dimensions, but clumsy and ineffective architecture, on one side, and a mill with its overshot channel on the other, add any redeeming features to the landscape. One of the canals above-mentioned is of very ancient construction, and conducts a considerable body of water to the fertilisation of the country round Torre della Nunziata; while a secondary branch deviates to

Pompeii.* The others, though turned into various courses for the purpose of irrigation, are united before they reach Scafati; after which they are crossed by the bridge on the road to Castellamare, and finally flow into the sea just opposite the little island of Revigliano.

The town, the river, and the mountain, all bear the name of Sarno, and it is not worth ascertaining from which of the three the appellation of the others was originally derived. Some antiquaries have quoted Virgil's line,

"Sarrastes populos, et quæ rigat æquora Sarnus,"

to prove that the denomination of the inhabitants partook of the same origin. What appears less doubtful is, that the size and position of the stream rendered it of some consequence, as dividing the territory of Campania from that of the Picentini, (as it now does the province of Terra di Lavoro from Principato Citra,) and forming at its mouth a maritime emporium for the use of Nuceria, Pompeii,

* The works of the gunpowder manufactory in that town are likewise animated by it. It is in contemplation to remove this establishment altogether to the source of the Sarno.

Stabia, &c. The depth of its waters will admit of small vessels reaching the bridge above-mentioned; but the facility with which these can load at all the towns in the bay, would render all expense to improve its navigation superfluous. Giustiniani in his Dictionary says, that it was navigable as late as the reign of the Aragonese kings; but that a Count of Celano, proprietor of Scafati, turned off the water in several courses for the use of mills, thereby impoverishing the stream and poisoning the air.

The town of Sarno, and its immediate vicinity, have been at different periods the scene of some remarkable military contests. The first which is recorded was in 553, when Narses defeated the Goths, commanded by their last king, Teja; and by this victory and his death put an end to the rule of those northern invaders in Italy, which had lasted about sixty-four years. The second action was at a much less remote period, during the minority of the Emperor Frederic II, King of the Two Sicilies; and is remarkable as having, through the death of Walter of Brienne, who had, in right of his

wife, claimed the possession of these domains, secured them to his successful, and undoubtedly more legitimate antagonist. The third encounter was in the reign of Ferdinand I. of Aragon, who, after having been surrounded by the forces of John of Anjou, succeeded not only in escaping from the dangerous position in which he was placed, but in finally overcoming the army of this prince, and driving him out of the kingdom. This event was considered of such vital importance as to induce this monarch, at no time remarkable for either gratitude or liberality, to reward those who had furnished assistance to him in the hour of peril by various grants and concessions. The town of La Cava in particular, whose syndic had strenuously exerted himself on this occasion, was largely endowed and recompensed, as recorded by an inscription still existing in the little village of Duppino, of which place this magistrate was a native, and where his descendants probably obtained leave to erect this memorial in the time of Charles V, whose name, by a singular error and anachronism, is mentioned in lieu of Ferdinand's.

Soon after leaving the last and most copious of the sources of the Sarno, the remains of a row of brick arches are seen. These belong to the great aqueduct which was constructed by the Romans for the purpose of conveying the waters of the river Sabbato from Serino, where it rises, to Pozzuoli, and afterwards to the Piscina Mirabile at Baja; from which line a secondary branch deviated into the city of Naples, which it entered near the spot where now stands the gate called Di Costantinopoli, and was the same which facilitated the entrance of the soldiers of Belisarius into the town: other ramifications of this work extended to Posilippo, S. Elmo, &c.

A curious document has been published by Giustiniani, which was written in the sixteenth century by a certain engineer named Pietro Antonio Lettieri, who had been directed by Peter of Toledo, then viceroy of Naples, to make minute and elaborate researches on this subject, with a view either of restoring the fabric or effecting a new one to answer the same purposes.

The road, following the curvature of the mountains, brings the traveller, a few miles far-

ther, to Palma, a depopulated and much smaller town than Sarno, but pleasantly situated, exactly facing Ottajano, on the slope of Vesuvius.

The most remarkable object in it is the baronial mansion, now belonging to the king, with a wooded territory rising behind it, crowned by the ruins of a very extensive Gothic castle. Here the other road from Scafati, by Poggio Marino, before mentioned, joins that to Nola, which is reached at the distance of about four more miles, leaving the picturesque village of Lauro on the right.

The low unpleasant position of Nola offers a singular contrast to the well-chosen sites of several monasteries and the episcopal seminary in the vicinity; most of which are placed on gentle rising grounds among woods, with handsome avenues of large elms leading to them. Two miles beyond this, the track I had hitherto followed falls into that leading from the metropolis into Apulia, denominated, as such direct communications habitually are, Via Consulare; on which, it should be observed, Nola is not situated.

Shortly after, I stopped to bait at a large

tavern, called Le Anime del Purgatorio, from a church so termed standing opposite to it.

The rain, which fell heavily, precluded any investigation of the surrounding country, which however, from the flatness of its aspect, and the monotonous though fertile character of the mode of cultivation, could have afforded but a slight degree of interest. On resuming my progress, Cardinale, Bajano, and Mugnano are passed, substantial, well-built villages, especially the two last; soon after which, a picturesque bridge, named Ponte a Quattro Occhi, crossing a deep ravine, marks the line of division between the provinces of Terra di Lavoro and Principato Ultra; which last is entered at the foot of the long, tedious, but not very steep ascent leading up to the pass of Monteforte. The volcanic quality of the soil continues unchanged along the whole of this acclivity, and its rugged surface shows even blacker and less questionable symptoms of its origin than in the plain; a character by no means concealed by the altered vegetation which clothes it, and probably greatly tends to give it a singularly wild and gloomy aspect.

The lateral hills, rising on each side in fantastic crags, are thickly covered with forests of sweet-chestnut trees, which appear to grow with peculiar vigour on the slopes of all volcanic mountains, though seldom seen in masses on the flats: an observation which must strike all those who make excursions among the numerous craters of extinct volcanoes that surround the capital; such as Agnano, Astrumi, the steeps of the Camaldoli, and the still more singular succession of volcanic basins forming the territory known by the name of Quarto, which extends under the hill of the Camaldoli and Monte Barbaro, (anciently Gaurus,) near Pozzuoli.

About half-way up the hill of Monteforte, a heap of masonry of imposing magnitude presents to the spectator the confused architectural remains of a fine fountain. The supply of water which it still affords to the way-worn pedestrian, or the panting herds, betrays in its diminished and scanty stream the workings of time and neglect; but retains stronger claims upon their gratitude than the diffuse high-flown inscription, which has better withstood

the attacks of years and weather, and informs the traveller that it was erected by Charles III.

Such monuments, recording the construction of roads, fountains, and bridges, are of frequent occurrence within a certain distance of the capital; and appear to have been most common during the rule of the Spanish viceroys: but their dilapidated condition, as well as the sometimes entire annihilation of the undertakings and works which they are meant to commemorate, prove that the spirit which prompted their structure has not been hereditary; or that more recent labours have engrossed the care and attention necessary to the preservation of ancient works; so that the name of *Epitaffio*, usually affixed to these recording monuments, sounds to an English ear as peculiarly adapted to their present condition and aspect.

It has often been remarked that one of the characteristic features of Italy, and, perhaps, more especially of its southern division, is the appearance of modern decay (if I may so call it) which stamps all the productions of human industry, art, or labour. The villas, the gardens, the palaces, always betray in some of their com-

ponent parts, and not unfrequently in all, the want of that conservative inspection which alone can secure mortal edifices from the ravages of time and climate. Notwithstanding the picturesque effects which are produced by this very neglect, the sensations they create are always mournful; associated, though perhaps unconsciously, with the painful ideas attached to premature decay, or arising from the spectacle of untimely dissolution in a robust frame.

The village of Monteforte is about four miles distant from the first point of ascent, and placed on the declivity of the northern side of the mountain; but many of its houses, and the ruins of its baronial castle, are scattered on the higher flanks of the eminence, and command prospects of great extent in either direction: these last are extremely picturesque, but retain at the same time the gloomy colouring which marks the whole district. It does not appear that any town of consequence ever existed on this spot; but its position, from which the name was probably derived, rendered it a post of importance at all times.

Charles of Anjou bestowed Monteforte, with a proportionate grant of lands, on one of his bravest commanders, Guy de Montfort; stimulated, as some authors suppose, by the accidental similarity between the two names, but urged more probably by the wish of signally rewarding the individual in question. Three generations of this illustrious race appear to have been destined to fill high stations in various parts of Europe; and in their different positions acquired equal notoriety for ambition, valour, pride, and ferocity; qualities which, in those warlike days, but too frequently moved in unity.

The famous Simon de Montfort commanded the bloody crusade against the Albigenses. His son, bearing the same name, became the well-known Earl of Leicester, who contended successfully against our Henry III, and wrung from him that acknowledgment of the rights of a British subject which laid the foundation of the Magna Charta of that sovereign.

His son Guido and his nephews accompanied Charles of Anjou in his unjustifiable invasion of the kingdom of Naples; one of the two

last, Philip, was appointed governor of Sicily, and by his tyrannical and overbearing conduct greatly roused the vindictive spirit of resistance which so frightfully disclosed itself in the Sicilian Vespers.

Guy, or Guido, above-mentioned, besides the territorial recompenses bestowed upon him by Charles of Anjou, was appointed vicar-general in Tuscany; and it was while holding that rank that he rendered his name execrable, even in that æra of unrestrained ferocity, by the murder of Prince Henry of England, perpetrated by his own hands in the cathedral of Viterbo, in the presence of the Kings of Naples and France.

The direct line of this family was not of extended duration in the kingdom of Naples; for, although there are some who still bear the name, it does not appear that they can prove their descent from the ancient stock.

In more recent times, Monteforte has acquired a painful celebrity as the spot where the first symptoms of the Revolution of 1820 openly manifested themselves, and to which the different armed assemblages bent their way from

other parts of the kingdom to establish a constitution. They had fortified, or rather strongly guarded, the bridge of Quattr' Occhi, beforementioned, as the first step to the pass; and had intended to have made there the first stand against the royal troops. Their head-quarters were subsequently transferred to Avellino, in which town the Spanish constitution was first proclaimed, and from which afterwards all the insurgent forces marched peaceably into the capital.

The distance from Monteforte to Avellino does not exceed four miles, on an abrupt and continued declivity; and the face of the country, both as to soil and cultivation, presents quite a different spectacle from the Terra di Lavoro. The mountains, which are on a grand scale, are entirely covered with chestnut woods; while the intervening flats are divided into extended fields inclosed by hedges of elder. But what most particularly characterises this district, are the clumps of filbert, mixed with other fruit-trees, which are planted at regular distances in all the inclosures, and are evidently trained and attended to with much care and

attention. Between these the vines and maize are cultivated as usual, but the produce exhibits in its appearance the operations of a much less genial climate. This is also strongly exemplified in the numerous *neviere*, or snow-pits, which are dug in these fields. They consist of square or circular excavations of some depth, surrounded by a wall supporting a low roof, with two doors for entrance and egress. The snow is merely swept or shovelled in during the winter season, and covered with straw or leaves. Some are not even provided with a covering, and many are close to the road side. We met several carts laden with it journeying towards the capital, which, however, derives the greatest portion of its supplies of this indispensable article from Castellamare.

The approach to Avellino offers nothing remarkable: some straggling mean houses, increasing in number and magnitude, gradually assume the form of a long street, leading to the Intendenza and other public edifices, irregularly seated round a large square: this is succeeded by the main body of the city, which covers but a limited extent of ground, being

composed of narrow streets thickly inhabited, and animated by an aspect of industry and bustle which is not unpleasing. The inhabitants are active and laborious; and Giustiniani observes, that most of the individuals who carry on in Naples the confection of that object of vital necessity, maccaroni, are natives of Avellino or its diocese: it has, moreover, some manufactures of very indifferent cloth, and lastly, of sausages, whose superior excellence has long been admitted. It is supposed to contain about ten thousand souls, and is the seat of a bishop; but the cathedral is very unequal to the magnitude of the town.

The diocese was established in 884; but the Lombards having destroyed the ancient city, it was rebuilt on the present site in 887: Roger, the first king of Sicily, was crowned there by the anti-Pope Anacletus. The only building worthy of notice is the ancient baronial mansion of the princes of Avellino, (the principal branch of the Carraccioli family,) now forsaken by its proprietors, and adapted by government to the temporary occupation of the customs and excise, to which purpose its

position in. the market-place is well suited. This edifice, apparently constructed under the rule of the Spanish viceroys, bears the vestiges of considerable architectural taste and labour, and its front is adorned with many statues both ancient and modern.

The Abellinum of the Romans, the original town, of which a few ruins still exist, stood a mile farther, near Atripaldi, now a large and flourishing village, watered by the copious and rapid Sabbato, which greatly contributes to vivify its manufactures, in the various forms of iron-foundries, copper-works, paper and fulling-mills. It contains about four thousand inhabitants, and is noted in the province for a weekly market for cattle, which is the rendezvous of all the wealthy proprietors in the vicinity. A smaller rivulet runs along the south flank of Avellino, and afterwards under a wooded bank, thickly studded with villas and farm-houses, which adds great beauty to the surrounding scenery. Indeed, it would be difficult to find an inland landscape that can vie in picturesque effect with that which presents itself to the traveller who approaches the town

from the eastern entrance; that is, the opposite approach from the Neapolitan side.

The richness of the woods that cover the surrounding hills, the town itself filling up the flat ground between them, and the boldness of the background formed by the outline of Monte Vergine and its apparently inaccessible sanctuary, are well worthy of the artist's attention and pencil; but a peculiar gloom overhangs all the picture, which, though not very clearly defined, is sufficiently remarkable to give it a striking character, and which I can only attribute to the absence of the sun from a great portion of the general landscape.

The town of Avellino, as the foregoing account may show, boasts of little that can excite the curiosity of a stranger; but an excursion to Monte Vergine will perhaps compensate this deficiency. There is a tolerable carriage-road in the flat behind the city, between it and the first buttresses of the mountain, as far as the large village of Mercogliano; at the entrance of which is situated the *Ospizio*, belonging to the monastery, which in point of size and convenience far exceeds the establishment itself. Most of

the large communities placed in very high, and consequently cold expositions, were provided with an appendage of this kind, where the delicate or the convalescent might occasionally repair, and where the superior, without any of these claims, usually makes his habitual residence. The rigid effects of the temperature of Monte Vergine are considered so severe, that the monks only pass eight successive days at a time in the monastery, taking it by turns to inhabit the Ospizio, which, however, is of modern construction and somewhat fantastic architecture: the interior offers nothing remarkable but the archives, which were respected when the community was suppressed by the French, and rank in importance and interest next to those of Monte Cassino and La Cava.

At Meroogliano horses can always be procured for the ascent of the mountain, which extends in zigzag lines, for a distance of three miles, along a very stony path winding under fine chestnut-trees, but furnished with scarcely any other vegetation. Indeed, the whole aspect of the mountain on this side bespeaks the operation of a damp, cold, and variable climate.

Of the last quality I twice made the experiment, having been drenched at two very distant periods with a deluge of rain on my way downwards, which drove in my face with so much violence, and washed down the road in such torrents, that I was forced to dismount. The clearness of the sky previous to these sudden variations in the temperature enabled me, however, to enjoy the extraordinary prospect which from the summit of the mountain is displayed to the greatest advantage.

The building, which has been allowed to retain much of its original form of structure, is not situated at the highest extremity; but a few minutes of very easy ascent will enable the visitor to reach the uppermost pinnacle, and afford him a bird's-eye view of the entire plain of Naples, the sea, and the islands. This peak, one of the highest among those that are seen from the capital, is always the first to be covered with snow in the autumn, and is the last to lose its wintry garment in the spring. The original founders of the monastery may be supposed to have been actuated by the spirit of self-denial which characterises their

rigid order, when they excluded their residence from the advantages of a southern exposition, and raised its foundations on a narrow ledge exactly facing the north-east, and exposed to all the evils of such a situation on so elevated a spot. It must, however, be admitted, that the view from this side, differing as to features, colouring, and character from that to the south, is perhaps more gratifying and imposing, though it extends over an inland country.

The towns of Avellino and Atripaldi at the foot of the mountain, that of Montefuscolo on a high and bleak eminence in the distance, and numerous villages studded all over the finely formed and thickly wooded belt of mountains that circumscribe the prospect in all its parts, give it great effect and variety.

A quadrangle, or cloister, stretches at the foot of a flight of steps leading up to the church and monastery; and a portion of the building that surrounds it is allotted to the residence of a tavern-keeper, who provides refreshment for man and beast, and reaps a plentiful harvest at two different periods of the year, when the

celebration of local festivals attracts an incredible number of devotees and pilgrims from the surrounding districts, and even distant provinces, at Whitsuntide, and the Nativity of the Virgin on the 8th of September.

The fame of this celebrated sanctuary dates from its consecration by St. William of Vercelli in the year 1119, but it was probably founded before this epoch; and advanced rapidly in opulence and sanctity for two hundred years afterwards. But its still greater importance was derived from the special favour shown to it by Catherine of Valois, titular Empress of Constantinople and Princess of Taranto, who placed it under her immediate protection, and, after enriching the community by large grants of land and pecuniary gifts, bestowed upon it a miraculous painting of the Virgin, the work of some of the Greek artists of Constantinople, and ordered that her own remains should be interred within its walls. Her son, Lewis of Taranto, husband to the beautiful, guilty, and unfortunate Queen Joan, appears to have inherited his parent's partiality for the establishment, and is likewise buried

there; with an unmarried sister, named Mary. A small ornamented chapel contains a modern inscription recording these events, and the pictures of the personages, of so recent a date as to preclude all possibility of resemblance.

The same sanctuary encloses the revered image which gives the monastery its characteristic denomination. It is of colossal dimensions, and, like almost all the paintings of its period, so dark and dingy as to be with difficulty discerned in detail. But it wears, nevertheless, an appearance of better style and execution than the generality of its contemporaries. The face only is coloured; the body being of dark brown carved wood, supporting an angel with extended wings on each shoulder, which adds greatly to the singularity of its aspect.

The church boasts but of limited dimensions, and presents nothing remarkable, unless an innumerable collection of relics of saints may so be termed, among which are the bones of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, likewise brought from Constantinople. Here also is a Roman sarcophagus with a Latin inscription, on which have been placed two recumbent marble

figures pointed out as the effigies of Catherine and her son. Another tomb, of the same kind, in the cloisters, is probably that of the Princess Mary, above-mentioned; as the figure, which is of much better workmanship, bears great resemblance, both as to design and costume, to that of Queen Joan in the church of S^ta^ Chiara at Naples.

A sepulchral record, of probably higher interest to the native visitors, is shown in a glass-case. It is the body of a saint, or rather Beato, belonging to the Verginian order of monks, who died in 1601; and is there preserved, if a dried and discoloured skin, tightly stretched over an emaciated carcase of protuberant bones, can be thought to present any appearance of conservation.

From the foregoing description it may be seen, that this monastery is more deserving of notice from its situation, than from any object of art or curiosity which it contains. The building, though exhibiting in some parts marks of recent repairs, has a weather-worn and venerable look; and this, with its numerous irregular projections, small roofs on differ-

ent levels, and detached masses of masonry, contributes to render its general appearance very picturesque. The library is in a complete state of abandonment and dilapidation; which is accounted for by its contents, and the valuable archives which enriched it, having been removed to the Ospizio at Mercogliano.

There are several inns at Avellino, which I severally tried at different periods; but among these only one has any pretensions to decent accommodation, though it is the first night's resting-place for all travellers from the capital into Apulia.

I continued my progress eastward towards the first stage on that road, through a country which is not surpassed in picturesque beauty by any other portion of the kingdom.

A mountain on the right, called Chiusano, from the district which it overlooks, is most remarkable for its form and height. Before the village of Pratola, about six miles from Avellino, the road crosses the river Sabbato, which stream is seen some time before this, meandering in the dells to the right; it then takes a sudden turn in an opposite direction,

and is lost in the valley through which it finds its way to Benevento. There is a short horse path to this last town, which I conclude is carried along its banks, and makes the distance between that and Avellino no more than fourteen miles; but the carriage road, which is that I followed, and which turns off at Montefuscolo, is nearly double that distance. A very steep and tedious ascent brings one to the level of that town, containing three thousand seven hundred inhabitants, and considered the second in the province, of which it long was the capital. Its very bleak and unpromising situation deterred me from even obtaining a transient glance at it, at the cost of the walk of one mile from the summit of the hill where we stopped to bait at a tavern called La Serra.

From this spot the view to the east, though very extensive, is by no means so gratifying as that which I had left behind me; as the soil appears less fertile, though productive of corn, and the whole wants wood. It has, however, by no means a depopulated aspect, the number of villages in sight being considerable; among

which, Montemiletto, on the right at no great distance, though equally elevated with Montefuscolo, boasts of a much more favourable exposition. It is dignified with the name of town; has two thousand five hundred inhabitants, and a fine old feudal mansion belonging to the Tocco family, who derive from it the title of prince, and whose ancestors were sovereigns of the island of Cephalonia.

After resuming our way, we passed the village of Venticane, at the bottom of the hill, where the station for post-horses is established; and, proceeding onwards, crossed the river Calore, near the village of Campanarello. This stream, which must not be confounded with another of the same name that rises in the province of Principato Citra, and falls into the Sele near Persano, runs to the left like the Sabbato, towards Benevento, where they both unite.

The next stage is Grotta Minarda, where I proposed to stop; but made a previous halt a few miles before it near the little town of Mirabella, placed about a mile to the right of the high road; between which and the said town

are the ruins of the ancient city of Eilanum, one of the most distinguished in the Hirpine region. It likewise acquired some celebrity in the Social War by its resistance to the arms of Sylla, and finally became a Roman colony under the first triumvirate.

If one may judge from the numerous fragments of antiquity which its site has afforded in the form of statues, vases, coins, engraved stones, and jewellery, it must have boasted of affluence. These have been dispersed in sundry directions, but most of the inscriptions have found their way into the museum of the capital; while some fragments enrich private collections, and others (unfortunately a large portion) were yielded to the contractors for the adjoining road, and were literally broken and used for that purpose. In many of the villages through which it is conducted, portions of columns, and broken shafts, are seen forming part of the walls of the meanest edifices.

Nevertheless, it is supposed that excavations, directed with judgment, might be productive of favourable results. The site of the ancient city is recognised, close to the high road, at a

spot called Le Grotte, from the existence of several subterranean structures chiefly of brick. These, together with the faint traces of an amphitheatre, and the vestiges of twelve gateways, form the sum total of the existing ruins.

An arched passage of considerable length has been cleared of the soil, and bears the aspect of having always been an underground fabric, as it only receives the light from square apertures at regular distances in the upper vault. The traces of pipes along the lateral walls point it out as a conductor for water, but its height leads one to suppose that it must have been used likewise as a channel of communication.

An inhabitant of the town of Mirabella, named Guarini, has written an elaborate work on these antiquities, in which all the inscriptions ever found there are recorded. Lupoli, in his Iter Venusinum, has also published a great number.

A proprietor of the soil, whom we met on the spot, and who very obligingly accompanied me and my companion in our investigation, informed us that the dispersion, and even destruction of the remains of antiquity which had been

and are still found, may be ascribed to the arbitrary measures adopted by the municipal and superior authorities, who neither allow the landholder to retain what he may find on his territory, or grant him an equitable remuneration for even the personal fatigue incurred in the excavation; so that all objects thus discovered are either concealed, or disposed of secretly at a very trifling price, or broken up for lime and building materials.

A distance of three miles brought us to Grotta Minarda, the next station towards Ariano; and here we stopped as agreed upon. I had been told there was a tolerable inn, and the exterior promise held out by a small but cleanly house seemed to justify this prediction: but we found a landlord who, in a spirit directly contrary to the rapacity of the lower class in these regions as to immediate profit, would only grant us the use of one small chamber; alleging as a reason, that the fair of Salerno had commenced, and it was probable that, before night, several old customers might seek a lodging and be disappointed. It was in vain I represented that we might stay two whole days, and offered

to pay during that time for as many beds as the occupation of three rooms would deprive him of; he was relentless, and would not run the chance of disobliging ancient acquaintance who travelled that road every year. This was said in so firm, though neither harsh nor uncivil a manner, that we gave up the point, and were fortunate enough to find humbler, but by no means bad accommodation in another inn, a little beyond his; and it was not possible to entertain a feeling of displeasure against his unhospitable but frank declaration.

Our abode contained two clean beds in a spacious room, and another in an adjoining one for my servant: we found chickens, pigeons, eggs, and maccaroni (which are everywhere to be had); and, as to this substantial foundation we were lucky enough to add potatoes, we could not reasonably find cause for complaint.

Grotta Minarda is a village of about fifteen hundred inhabitants, relying chiefly on agricultural labour for their subsistence. It contains but one good house, which belongs to a priest. The situation is bleak and cheerless, though not elevated; and it is surrounded by ugly clay

hills, producing only corn, and intersected by deep and narrow ravines, through which a sluggish and scanty rill usually flows.

Many villages are seen in all directions; and straight before it, in an eastern line, the town of Ariano, standing on the summit of a conical hill, with the tedious prospect of the steep, and apparently interminably repeated zigzag road leading to it.

On the following day I went to Frigento, a little town of two thousand three hundred inhabitants, once boasting of an episcopal see, long since united to that of Avellino. To this spot there is a good carriage road, diverging from the main track about a mile west of Grotta Minarda. I stopped at a tavern placed at the foot of the knoll on which Frigento stands; and, while donkeys were preparing, enjoyed the very extensive and, in some parts, gratifying prospect which this elevated spot commands.

About a mile below Frigento is seen the smaller, but better peopled town of Gesualdo, with a square respectable-looking feudal mansion among some wooded and cultivated

grounds. Beyond this, in a southern direction, the eye wanders over the village of Torella, and a vast tract of varied country; penetrating into the openings of the mountains that surround it, and reaching as far as the considerable towns of Nusco, S. Angelo de' Lombardi, and Guardia Lombarda, whose names sufficiently denote their origin. On the left, that is, the Apulian side, the range of hills is barren and uninteresting in its aspect; but it boasts of some small towns, among which are Trevico, Pulcherino, Cariti, Zurlo, and lastly Ariano. There are also many single farms, every one of which is furnished with a pigeon-house: the flocks of birds to which these receptacles give shelter are innumerable throughout all this district. But the view back towards Avellino preserves its pre-eminence in picturesque beauty and richness of effect.

Our animals being ready, we set off in a southern direction over a light soil of inconsiderable depth on a stratum of chalk, producing scanty herbage, and occasionally a few oaks. The path which I followed establishes a communication between the high road to Apulia

and some of the distant towns above-mentioned, finally leading to Melfi in Basilicata, whose mountain with its double peak, about twenty-eight miles distant, closes the prospect on that side.

The spot I sought, which indeed formed the principal object of my excursion to these parts, was the Pool of Amsanctus, known in the country by the less classical, but more strictly appropriate denomination of Le Mofette.

> 'Est locus, Italiæ medio, sub montibus altis,
> Nobilis, et famâ multis memoratus in oris,
> Amsancti Vallis, &c.

These lines of Virgil have stamped this glen with a mysterious and terrific celebrity, which modern writers have, in their descriptions, rather magnified than extenuated. I am bound to believe the reports of eye-witnesses, many of which had assured me that the spot could not be approached without danger.

Swinburne himself, whose veracity on all points is unquestionable, asserts that the noxious vapour rising from these waters was so dense, and extended so far, that he was compelled to give up a nearer investigation. Gius-

tiniani, in his Geographical Dictionary, enumerates no less than six persons who fell victims to this pestilential exhalation, besides numerous heads of cattle and animals of all kinds; so that, even allowing for some exaggeration, it was not possible to divest oneself of all notion of peril. But when I consider the facility with which I was enabled to obtain access to this formidable pit, I must suppose that particular seasons or atmospheric changes may modify, and probably entirely neutralize, its baneful effects. The guide who showed us the way, and seemed familiar with it, was evidently strongly impressed with implicit conviction of the pernicious nature of the exhalations, and did not fail to cite various examples of their malignity, confined however to quadrupeds or birds; and when, after a progress of three miles, we came rather suddenly on a bank from which the pool became visible at no great distance below us, he stopped short and conjured us to go no farther: an injunction which we obeyed in order to consider the singular rather than terrific spectacle it exhibited.

The lake, as it is called, is placed at the ex-

tremity of a narrow ravine, one side of which is formed by the range of low hills on which we stood, while the other, extending a wider expanse of slope, is covered with a copse-wood of some magnitude. A transversal, and very steep ledge, of inconsiderable height, terminates this gully; having at its base a crevice of longitudinal irregular form, of about fifty feet long by thirty in breadth, which presents at first sight the strange appearance of a cauldron filled with lead in a violent state of ebullition.

From some distance we had been directed to observe the vapour suspended over the spot in a thin column of light smoke; but a nearer approach divested it of that appearance, probably from the peculiar brightness of the sunbeams at that hour.

The precipitous ridge that rises along the whole length of the chasm is entirely destitute of vegetation, which is easily accounted for by the exhalations being carried immediately against its surface when the wind blows in that direction; while the opposite bank, above which we stood, is flat, and sprinkled, at a very short distance from the edge of the pond, with

tufts of rushes and coarse herbage. To this platform it was an easy matter to descend, and from thence my companion cast a stone-bottle into the pool with a rope fastened to it, in the hope of seeing it filled, and drawing it out. In so doing, the cord slipped out of his hand, following the vessel; which, being empty, was carried to and fro with the agitated motion of the liquid. I was unwilling that he should approach nearer the edge, for fear of accident, though he said he felt no greater inconvenience from the sulphureous effluvia than he had experienced when first we were made sensible of it on the top of the bank. He was provided with another length of rope, to the end of which having tied a stone, and throwing it over the bottle, it secured its return to the bank, though of course still unfilled.

During this operation our conductor was in a state of apparent despair and terror at his imprudence in venturing so near the abyss, and so repeatedly vociferated that he was risking his existence, that I began to share in the alarm he testified, and earnestly intreated him to return; when our donkey-drivers, who had lag-

ged behind, overtook us, and at once dispelled my fears and doubts by declaring that they had frequently drawn buckets of water from the pool itself; and descended to assist him, which I did likewise. The smell was more pungent, ammoniacal, and even perfumed, than above; but I found no impediment to respiration, except when I bowed my head very near the earth; so that I conceive it to be very much the same kind of gas as that which prevails in the Grotta del Cane near Naples.'

The crumbling nature of the soil near the immediate border made it advisable to give up an attempt at a closer approach, which moreover became unnecessary, from the facility obtained of filling our stone-bottle from a round hole a few yards distant from the main reservoir, though evidently supplied by it, in which the liquid boils up with equal violence.

It was indeed evident that we stood on a kind of shelf or crust of no very great thickness, under which the water extends to some distance, and which it probably overflows at particular periods. The dark colour of the liquid is occasioned by its own turbulence,

which is stronger along the line of the precipitous bank than on the opposite flat edge; but the whole surface is in a state of continued agitation, throwing up portions of black clay, which, mixing with the fluid, both darken and thicken it: these, however, are speedily deposited at the bottom of any vessel in which it is placed in a state of repose, leaving it perfectly clear and tasteless, and of an icy temperature.

I own that this last circumstance must, on the first glance, strike the spectator as most at variance with the other phenomena exhibited; for nothing can appear more unaccountable than that the surrounding soil should be so hot as to preclude any one from standing barefooted upon it for a few minutes, that it should emit a volcanic vapour, and that the water should show itself in an uninterrupted state of ebullition, and yet be perfectly cold to the touch. All this, however, may be explained by the supposition that it is the gas, disengaging itself from the bottom of the reservoir, which causes the apparent fermentation; and if so, I think one may venture the opinion that, in so doing, it loses much of its noxious

qualities, and that the vapours exhaled by the earth, and not by the water, are those which are pernicious.

The turbid and restless surface renders it impossible to obtain by the eye a correct idea of its depth, but various other appearances go some way to prove that it is inconsiderable towards the flat edge, and probably not exceeding six feet in any part; so that the tradition of profundity unfathomable by line or plummet may safely be exploded, as may also that attached to it in common with the lakes of Averno and Agnano, viz. that birds cannot fly over it with impunity. Chance furnished me with an incontrovertible refutation of this worn-out fable during my short investigation, as a raven, and shortly after a wood-pigeon, skimmed directly over the boiling cauldron at no very great elevation.

I must, however, admit an opposite instance of the effects of the vapour on the winged tribe of insects, for the whole ground was strewed at some distance round with innumerable dead butterflies of a beautiful yellow colour. We were likewise much struck by the

penetrating qualities of the gas, notwithstanding its facility of dispersion in the open air, which completely blackened every article of metal on our clothes and in our pockets, even to the interior of our watches, which were not only discoloured, but arrested in their movements.

There is no visible outlet for these waters; but at the distance of about twenty yards from the pool's edge, a ravine or gully is formed, through which a scanty and sluggish rill is seen apparently oozing from the soil; this, though offering a totally different aspect, being no longer muddy, but only covered with a yellow film, is said by the natives to possess the same qualities as the waters of the lake. It is collected, about a mile farther, into a large reservoir, whence, being depurated, it is conveyed to some baths at a village called Villa Maina, which are frequented in the summer for the efficacy they possess in the relief of cutaneous and other chronic disorders; the waters being likewise drunk.

After taking a hasty sketch of the scene, which is more singular than picturesque, care-

fully closing the vessel containing the water collected, and carrying away with me some sand, clay, and stones, I quitted the pool of Amsanctus, and resumed the path to Frigento.

On the hill overlooking the crater, there is a hole or well, where we found some shepherds washing their flocks: they told us that the water it contained, and which they considered efficacious in curing the scab in animals, though less powerful, and emitting no vapour, was of the same quality as that we had examined.

CHAPTER II.

Road from Avellino to Salerno.—San Severino.—Mercato.—Family of San Severino.—Ferdinand Prince of Salerno.—Site for country residences.—Plain of Salerno.—Church at Giffoni.—Eboli.—A reformed brigand.—Historical notices.—Campagna.—Oliveto.—Road from Eboli to Melfi.—Laviano.—Aspect of Basilicata.—Muro.—A miserable tavern.—The Castle.—Atella.—Rionero.—Barile.—Mount Volture.—Character of the inhabitants of Barile.—Giochi d' acqua.—Dramatic representation.

I SHALL not recapitulate an account of my journey back from Grotta Minarda to Avellino. I arrived at Avellino on the third day, and departed for Salerno by a road of recent construction, which forms the communication between those two cities, and from the excellent mode of its construction, and the beauty of the country through which it runs, affords to the traveller the pleasantest drive of sixteen miles which perhaps any part of Europe can boast of. The first portion of the way, after quitting Avellino, brings but little change to the ap-

pearance of the landscape: high mountains, wooded to their very summit with chestnut and oak timber, the lower slopes cultivated with Indian corn under festoons of vines or clumps of filberts, single farm-houses, villas standing in hedged fields, with an ornamented gateway and avenue leading to them, form the principal objects.

This valley is little more than a succession of narrow dells, intersected by deep ravines, watered by a scanty but limpid and rapid brook. The view, consequently, is contracted on each side; but, after passing the well-built but execrably paved villages of Bellizze and Contrada, a gradual descent leads to a plain of more considerable expanse and length, that of Forino, likewise highly cultivated, but deficient in habitations: a second declivity, whose height and steepness has necessitated a tedious zigzag course of road through an open grove of oaks, displays the vale of San Severino below with the most happy effect.

This district, as much celebrated for fertility as for the natural beauties which distinguish it, may be about five miles in length, by little

more than two in breadth. It is bounded on either side by ranges of magnificent and variously formed mountains; and its centre is occupied longitudinally by a secondary line of hills, covered by clusters of villages which constitute the tract or state of San Severino: a name attached to none of these in particular, but usually added to the peculiar denomination of each, such as Fisciano, Penta, Sava, Mercato, di San Severino, &c.

The road, after it is brought down to the level of this plain, is conducted along the base of the eastern range which bounds it, having all these villages situated, at no different heights, to the left; thereby gaining a much more favourable view of the varieties of character and aspect which they successively exhibit, than if it was conducted actually through them. There are, however, good carriage-tracks branching off to most of them; but not above three stand close to the road. One of these is Mercato, so named from a weekly market of sufficient importance to place it on a primary rank among the other villages forming the state of San Severino, and which is contrasted with the limited

dimensions it exhibits, and the meanness of its general appearance.

It owes, however, probably as much of its modern consequence to the junction of the high road from Naples and Nocera, which is effected within its precincts; and in feudal times was considered in a still more respectable light, from a very extensive castle and fortress, of which the remains are seen scattered over the most considerable portion of a hill which rises above the valley at its angle with the pass from Nocera, which it commanded, and which has been alluded to at the beginning of this tour.

There have been great discussions among the annalists and genealogists, which this kingdom contains in no small number, as to the spot which may be with certainty pointed out as having conferred its name on one of the most illustrious families of which it can boast,—that of San Severino; whose founders, of Norman extraction, and engrafted in the country with the conquerors of that race, undoubtedly received the feudal denomination, which superseded their original patronymic, from some in-

vestiture granted by the victors. But there are several spots so designated in various parts of the kingdom, which all, at different periods, belonged to this family; so that it is difficult to decide which of them possesses the best founded claims to this honour.

The castle of San Severino, from its magnitude, the peculiar importance attached to its position, and the additions successively made to it by several members of this house, is supposed by many to have been regarded by them as the cradle of their name and family; but Antonini, in his *Lucania*, has, with much apparent plausibility, ascribed the right to this distinction to another San Severino in the Cilento, or south-eastern portion of the Principato Citra.

The reader will probably not attach so much interest to this controversy; so I shall content myself with observing, that as this was a possession to which they evidently attached a very high value during many centuries, and which they frequently made their chief residence, it is not surprising that the remains of some of the proprietors should rest in its principal church.

This building, which, though modernised both exteriorly and inwardly, is in a state of dilapidation, contains the tomb of Thomas San Severino, high constable of the kingdom, the head of the family in the fourteenth century, and the original stock from which the subsequent branches sprung in such number as to possess among them nearly an eighth part of the realm. This monument is in very good preservation; and, though executed in an unequal manner, presents not an unfavourable specimen of the art of sculpture in the year 1353.

The eldest branch of his lineal descendants acquired, in addition to the other vast domains they already enjoyed, the investiture and sovereignty of the principality of Salerno, granted to them about the middle of the fifteenth century through the gratitude or munificence of the Aragonese kings.

It was impossible for a subject to step higher; and the reign of Charles V. saw the termination, or rather the downfal, of a power which could effectually contend with, and not unfrequently baffle, the encroachments of vicerегal tyranny in the person of Peter of Toledo.

Ferdinand, or Ferrante San Severino, the fourth and last individual who bore the title and exercised the prerogatives of Prince of Salerno, was, during the whole of a long and agitated career, placed, more through fortuitous circumstances than choice or disposition, in constant opposition to the arbitrary measures and plans of that overbearing but sagacious statesman, who seems to have combined all the resources of his master-mind to ruin and destroy the man who seemed destined to thwart all his designs, either as the leader of a dignified and offended nobility, or the popular chief of a tumultuous rabble.

In these alternate characters the Prince of Salerno betrayed no deficiency of boldness or talent; but an inexplicable inconsistency of character and disposition rendered him incapable of deriving any ultimate advantages from either position, or even of maintaining the high station he had attained. After occupying the highest offices which the armies of Charles V. and his own country could open to him, he gradually not only fell step by step from the eminence on which fortune had seated him,

but, stimulated, as it appears, by artful persecution, and stung by real as well as imaginary wrongs, he finally fled from the kingdom, and, in a moment of despair, suspicion, and resentment, threw off his allegiance to his sovereign, and entered the service of France. This was the signal for outlawry and confiscation; and the principality of Salerno, with all his other domains, was united to the crown. After some years of an unsettled but ignoble existence, he died a Protestant, in an obscure state of indigence, without leaving any children.

The name of this personage is not much known in general history; but an account of his life, connected as it was with the principal political events of Italy during the sixteenth century, and more particularly with those which illustrated the long administration of Peter of Toledo, and signalized his ineffectual attempt to establish the inquisition at Naples, would prove a work of considerable curiosity and interest.

Pursuing the road southward, the little village of Baronisi is gone through, remarkable from a convent of Capuchins placed in a pic-

turesque situation a little on the left. Shortly after this, on an eminence which closes the valley of San Severino, that of Capriglia is passed; from which a third declivity brings one down into a much lower plain, which, somewhat changed in the character of the vegetation which adorns it, shortly admits a view of the sea, to which it gradually descends by gentle slopes.

This last valley yields in magnitude, and perhaps fertility, to that of San Severino; but the agency of a milder climate gives it another character, and probably a greater charm. The olive grows on the lower banks of the hills; while the re-appearance of the orange, myrtle, and caper-plant, and that peculiar luxuriance in the growth of wilder productions which distinguishes a meridional coast, bespeak the vicinity of the Mediterranean waters even before their glitter breaks upon the sight.

The little river Irno, which has its source in the district of San Severino, flows along the centre of this vale, receiving many lateral brooks that enrich it from the mountain on either side; and the road, which is carried at

some height above its level, runs through the villages of Coverchia, Galdo, &c.: these have, almost all, manufactures of coarse blue cloth, which occupy the greatest portion of the inhabitants, and diffuse an appearance of industry and ease. The road finally falls at a right angle into that which leaves the city of Salerno at its eastern extremity, very near the spot where the above-mentioned stream enters the sea.

Not only the portion of the country over which I had journeyed that day, appeared to me one of the most pleasing I had ever beheld, but subsequent visits and observations have confirmed the opinion, that it offers, perhaps of all the situations within the same distance of Naples, the most eligible for a country residence. The facility of a direct communication with the capital, the vicinity of the sea, and that of such considerable towns as Salerno, Avellino, and Nocera, the excellent state of the high road and of those which give access from one village to the other, the number of these villages, their population and the resources they afford, constitute so many artificial but very necessary advantages, which, added to the

natural beauty of the landscape and the salubrity of the air, should render the attainment of an abode in these parts highly desirable.

I remained a couple of days at Salerno; and, quitting it on the 1st of October, I limited my first day's journey to Eboli, under the oppressive influence of an autumnal sun, whose potency was rather aggravated than diminished by the medium of a thick hazy atmosphere.

This is not unfrequently the case at this period of the year, when the sea-breeze has lost that diurnal regularity and briskness which invariably characterise it from June till September. The road is good, and runs at about a mile's distance from the sea, along the rich but unhealthy plain of Salerno, also called Piano d'Eboli. The view across this flat is, notwithstanding its fertility, somewhat monotonous, being only relieved by the rare appearance of some fine oaks, scattered singly in the fields. But the inland range of hills on the left is well clothed with wood and vegetation, and amply furnished with small towns or villages in commanding positions.

The most distant and important among these

are those of Giffoni, Monte Corvino, Acerno, and Olevano. The three first-mentioned are looked upon as deriving their origin from the destruction of the ancient Picentia and the dispersion of its inhabitants.

Nearer to Salerno are La Pastena, Ogliastro, Cagnano, and others. Three streams are crossed: the first is the Irno above-mentioned; the second, more copious, is called the Vicentino, which has its source behind the village of Giffoni; the third is the Tusciano, which traverses the road at Battipaglia, where a new and well-constructed track leads to Pæstum.

Near Giffoni an ancient church has attracted the notice of some antiquaries, who have not hesitated to pronounce its site that of the temple of Juno Argiva. But the allusion to this edifice by Strabo and Plutarch as placed on the banks of the Silarus, now Sole, renders such a supposition inadmissible. The form of the building, which is worthy of investigation, assimilates it to some of the earliest constructions adapted to Christian worship from the rites of Paganism.

We went through neither town nor village,

though the skirts of many, such as Cagnano, Pagliara, and Vicenza (the ancient Picentia) reach the road; which however is not deficient in large farm-houses, villas, and taverns. We gradually deviated from the sea-shore as the plain widened, and at Eboli found ourselves thirteen miles from it.

This town is reckoned sixteen miles (two posts) from Salerno; but, from the time employed in reaching it, I should not think the distance more than twelve. A large inn, formerly a monastery, the interior distribution of which is peculiarly well adapted to the purposes to which it is now converted, is placed exactly facing an avenue of trees leading into the town, and obviated the necessity of driving into it. Here we stopped, and found, in the cleanliness of the linen and some other advantages, wherewithal to make up for sluggish attendance and indifferent fare.

The building itself presented a very picturesque exterior, and interesting vestiges of the masonry of the middle ages; while the establishment boasted moreover of the singular particularity of being tenanted by a reformed brigand,

who, having thrown himself on the mercy of the government by what is looked upon as an unconditional, and consequently voluntary surrender, had received a full pardon, and the privilege of passing his old age in honourable retirement.

I was equally amused and edified with hearing this veteran hold forth to a large assemblage of mule-drivers, peasants, and ragged children, on the sinfulness of drunkenness and blasphemy, and descanting with equal vehemence on the loyalty he had displayed in the service of King Ferdinand.

The situation of Eboli, which contains four thousand inhabitants, is more pleasing than romantic or picturesque; but it is sufficiently elevated above the intervening flat to enjoy an uninterrupted view of the sea, and the magnificent forest of Persano with its palace.

Some smooth and well-clothed hills rise immediately behind the town, and some houses and convents placed on this range are very happily situated.

To the eastward the prospect is of a bolder and more extended character, embracing the

line of Mount Alburnus, with the towns of Altavilla, Albanella and Postiglione.

The climate is no less extolled for its mildness than the air is noted for its insalubrity, caused by the marshy soil of the wide plain that extends between it and the sea, whose summer breeze wafts the noxious vapours against the town and its impending heights.

It was a place of some importance in the middle ages. Peter of Eboli, in the twelfth century, wrote a metrical work, which is referred to more for its historical than poetical merits, as containing the only authentic account of the life and deeds of Tancred, king of Sicily, who may be considered as the last male scion of the Norman dynasty.

At a less remote period Eboli belonged in fief to Robert de Cabano, who suffered a cruel death as one of the co-operators in the mysterious murder of Andrew of Hungary, husband to the celebrated Joan. And, later still, it gave the title of prince to the no less famous Ruy Gomez de Silva, favourite and minister of Philip II. It now appertains, with a large portion of the surrounding territory, to a branch

of the Doria family established in this kingdom as princes of Angri.

Leaving Eboli on the following day, I quitted the high road, about half a mile beyond it, by one turning off abruptly to the left. It runs for some distance through an extensive grove of olive-trees, of venerable growth; after which it emerges into a beautiful wild glen, where a stream is crossed flowing from Campagna, a town farther back in the mountains, to which a good carriage road branches off from this spot.

This place boasts of an episcopal see and six thousand inhabitants; and is moreover remarkable for its good oil, and the reputation of having given birth to all the most notorious banditti who have infested this portion of the realm,—an honour, however, which is disputed by Eboli.

A zigzag ascent, the steepness and length of which tried the vigour and wind of our horses, and proved them very unfit for mountain work, leads to a more open level, diversified by clumps of forest trees and patches of olives and cultivated grounds, but bearing a wild and uninhabited aspect.

Here the operation of a colder temperature manifested itself, in the absence of the myrtle and other plants that love the shore, and the appearance of large platforms of fresh-looking turf. From this elevation the extent of Mount Alburnus is again visible, with the windings of the Sele in the distance, under the little town of Palo, picturesquely perched on a rock rising perpendicularly from its stream: on the left, the valley, through which it flows from its source, expands to the eye, and displays another kind of landscape.

The range on the opposite bank of the river, which we were approaching, is high, and surmounted by naked fantastic peaks; below which, first a belt of forest trees, then one of olives, and lastly a third of vines and cultivation, exhibit singular and characteristic features.

We passed through the little town of Oliveto, containing three thousand inhabitants: its interior offers nothing remarkable; but its aspect, on looking back to it, is somewhat striking; having a large baronial mansion as its principal object, rising majestically above the surrounding edifices and large tufts of trees.

From hence the road descends rapidly towards the Sele, which is crossed over a stone bridge, near some sulphureous springs: some very unartificial baths have here been excavated for the use of the natives, who use them in the summer. The wide stony bed of the river gives it the appearance of a torrent, but the stream is nevertheless abundant and perennial.

On leaving its bank, a cross road strikes out of the main branch to the villages of Cogliano and Coglianello, seated very high on the mountains; but the track we followed is carried along their flanks by a very tedious ascent to the little town of La Valva, containing thirteen hundred inhabitants.

I had wished to make it our resting-place, tempted by the beauty of the position and the hope of seeing the extensive gardens which surround the mansion of the Marquis of La Valva. Independently of this wish, strongly excited by the fame these have acquired, the circumstance of any proprietor residing by choice on his estate, and bestowing care and expense on the embellishment of his abode, was

alone sufficient to have arrested attention. But our conductor obstinately refused to halt till he should reach Laviano, some miles farther; which determination, as will be seen hereafter, laid the foundation of all the evils and inconveniences which signalized the remainder of this day's journey.

The owner of La Valva some years back held the office of director of the roads and bridges (*Ponti e Strade*), and availed himself of this situation to plan the present road from Eboli to Melfi, in Basilicata: it has been reproached to him that in so doing, his principal object was to obtain an easy communication from the capital to his own house and estates, to effect which, a considerable deviation from the straight and natural direction has been given to the road. This is probably true, but the general advantages resulting from such an undertaking are so obvious, that it is scarcely fair to record the motive, especially as it is well executed in all its parts; but the want of post-horses and inns, and the depopulated condition of the country through which it runs, are great drawbacks.

In reluctant compliance with our driver's determination, we proceeded onwards to Laviano, five miles farther; to reach which place, we first descended to a level considerably nearer the river, the course of which we then quitted to enter a lateral valley extending in an eastern direction from the northern line we had hitherto followed. We saw at a distance, on the other bank of the Sele, the little town of Senerchia, and beyond it the larger Calabritto, rising proudly from the water's edge; while, at a more remote distance still, we could just discern Capo Sele, whose name indicates the origin of the stream.

A continued acclivity led us through some fine groves of forest trees and sloping vineyards, watered by copious streams pouring from the impending mountains on the right; and, at last, a very steep and long hill announced the approach to Laviano: and here it was that our misfortunes commenced; for the horses, three in number, hired at Salerno, which had early in the day evinced symptoms of weakness and incapacity to encounter repeated mountains, at once refused to stir one step farther, and,

falling down under the reiterated lashes of the driver, left us at about a mile below Laviano, in the apparent impossibility of ever reaching it. We dismounted, and walked up to the village in the hope of procuring some mules to drag up our vehicle; but in this we were unsuccessful, as the only being we found to apply to was a sulky tavern-keeper, who did not possess what we required, and would not stir a step to assist in finding it. He was soon joined by several of the inhabitants of Laviano, situated on an inaccessible peak a few hundred yards higher than the church and tavern where we had stopped; but these, with one exception, (and he was not a native of the place,) seemed equally unaccommodating as himself.

While we were in this state of embarrassment, our carriage made its appearance, drawn by some labourers whom the temptation of a few carlins induced to act the part of our horses, which followed jaded and scarcely able to crawl. A council was then held, and, on learning that the town of Muro was not above thirteen miles distant, I determined to leave my carriage and servant to follow as soon as

the horses were able to do so, and with my companion to proceed onwards immediately, either on mules, if we could procure any, or on foot, if that was impracticable. I was incited to this plan by being led to believe that the Prince of T—'s agent, who was apprised of my arrival, would be expecting me that very evening at a tavern near Muro, where it had been arranged that we were to sleep that night, and where he probably had made preparations for that purpose.

But the tavern-keeper, though much softened in his manner by the unusual apparition of an English carriage in such parts, was so desirous of retaining us on his premises, that he placed every kind of difficulty in the way of our departure; and it was not till he saw us actually begin our journey on foot, with a peasant for our guide, that he produced a donkey from his stable, and with this, and a mule which was returning the same way with its master, we quitted Laviano, to make the best of the four remaining hours of daylight. This last place appeared, from the spot whence we viewed it, as gloomy and desolate as it is pic-

turesque; it contains about sixteen hundred inhabitants, and a feudal mansion, long since sold, with the surrounding territory, by the family to which it gives the title of duke. It is a stately edifice with a round turret at each corner, presenting a deplorable picture of decayed grandeur, with the roof fallen in, and all the window-frames torn out.

Very shortly after the commencement of our evening's journey, the aspect of the province of Basilicata, which we were soon to enter, opened before us under the most unpromising colours. A boundless wilderness of round-topped hills stretched in every direction as far as the sight could reach; and their surface, which had probably borne a copious harvest of corn and Indian-wheat, at this autumnal period presented an appearance of total sterility; not a village, habitation, or building to be seen, except occasionally a hut formed of rough uncemented stones, sustaining a conical roof of dried turf and straw: these are erected to receive the grain when first cut.

The soil is a stiff clay with an intermixture of sand; and in the ravines which intersect the

hills among which the road is conducted, some slow and scanty rills show themselves. The pace of our animals considerably retarded our progress, which was rendered moreover so extremely fatiguing, if not painful, in consequence of the wooden packsaddles and rope stirrups, that we soon preferred the use of our own limbs to such laborious assistance.

Our two guides had very early begun to relate tales of murder and robbery, which, if true, might induce us to regard our present expedition as very injudicious: they qualified their terrific narratives, however, by the assurance that the recent death of the chief of a band of robbers which had infested this district for a long space of time, and which had caused the dispersion of his followers, gave some safety to travellers just at the present time, though they added that there was no learning where the residue of his companions had secreted themselves.

The account of the death of this brigand, by name Zambini, was given by them in a most circumstantial manner, as having occurred ten days before; but, though highly dramatic

and interesting, I shall abstain from repeating it, for it proved a fabrication, as we afterwards learned from the best authority, and had probably been invented and spread to lull suspicion and defence.

The mule-driver quitted us with his beast about eight miles from Laviano, to turn off to a small town called Castel Grandiné, the first we had seen, placed on the upper slope of one of the hills, the base of which was cultivated with vines, cut low, and trained to short canes.

Our remaining companion looked wistfully at this diminution of our party, and testified such unequivocal symptoms of distress and terror whenever we traversed the patches of brushwood which occasionally intervened, that we deemed it advisable to support his spirits by declaring our disbelief of the dangers he apprehended. The partial copses we went through, generally scattered on a bank commanding the road, were indeed aptly fitted to an ambuscade; and to his remarks on the favourable nature of the locality, he added, that we, as strangers, ran only the risk of losing our

money or clothes, but that he, as an inhabitant of the district, likely to know the delinquents and to be called upon to identify them, must probably forfeit his life to their measures of precaution.

Just at sunset we arrived at a spot where the road branches off to Muro, some of its houses appearing in the distance on the right; while the principal track, which we followed, shortly brought us to the tavern, where I had every hope to find the accommodations and persons alluded to above. In this I was disappointed; and although we might have rested there for the night, (and ought to have done so,) the owner's manner was so little inviting, that I preferred proceeding a mile farther to another tavern, likewise called of Muro, which I flattered myself must realise my expectations. But after this additional walk, which took us from a short twilight to as short a moonlight, my disappointment was aggravated at finding the building we reached hermetically closed in every part, and evidently totally deserted. This is frequently the case with this kind of tenements, which are only hired for

short terms, and often evacuated before their expiration, from want of custom and success.

We were now more perplexed than ever with regard to our next proceedings; but although the most prudent step would probably have been to return to the tavern we had quitted, I was so impressed with the notion that *some* person was expecting me *somewhere*, that I resolved to continue my route to a third tavern, said to be situated about two miles farther. This intelligence was given by a few women and children, who hastily crossed the road with some faggots on their heads, and seemed equally surprised and alarmed at our appearance and our questions.

I was moreover urged to this determination by the reflection that, darkness having entirely set in, the danger of travelling was not greater in one direction than the other; and adding therefore as much speed to our movements as our flagging vigour would admit of, we marched on so briskly as to frequently leave our frightened companion and his slow-paced donkey far in the rear, when our compassion induced us to halt till they had joined us; so

that the whole of our nocturnal journey was not much accelerated by our efforts. An hour's time brought us to the object of our ultimate research, which showed itself in so humble a form as entirely to preclude all chance of finding there the person and accommodations which had lured us onwards.

A long and low-roofed building gave but slender hopes of even the most homely hospitality. Two cur-dogs stationed outside, and a feeble light glimmering from within, proved the abode to be inhabited; and the continued barking of the former, united to our own vociferations, at last called forth a tremulous interrogation as to what we wanted, and who we were. Our ready reply did not however seem likely to secure very speedy admittance to us; but, after some demur, and probably an investigation of our numbers and appearance through some chink or key-hole, the asseverations of our guide removed all suspicion; for the door was opened, and we were welcomed by the host and his wife, who, with a pretty little girl, their daughter, and a poor man worn to the last gasp by an intermittent fever, were the only inmates of the place.

It has fallen to my lot, in the course of sundry wanderings through different portions of Europe and Asia, to find myself compelled to seek shelter and a night's accommodation in many a lowly dwelling; but never did I see anything in the shape of venta, khan, posada, or tavern, that, on a first appearance, manifested such repulsive and hopeless tokens of abject poverty and destitution as this hut. It was evident that the owners, though they bade us welcome and made us sit down, could not immediately shake off the feelings of suspicion and alarm which their unprotected existence in a district so infested with crime and plunder had rendered habitual; and it was not till I had played with the child, and presented it a piece of copper, that they yielded without reserve to the impulse of hospitality, added perhaps to the prospect of gain.

The whole establishment consisted of three rooms, if they might so be called, communicating with each other by square apertures without doors in the dividing mud walls, which in no part reached the feeble rafters that bent under a mass of ill-jointed tiles. The

first, or outward compartment, served as a kitchen, where, under the black cap of the chimney, furnished with a drapery of smoky cobwebs, lay the sick man, shivering among some expiring embers. The next division was a kind of retiring-room, in which were placed, probably to be out of sight, the domestic and culinary utensils, and three old wooden chests: on one side, a narrow recess, parted off by hurdles, contained the only bed the tenement boasted of. The third apartment answered the purpose of a hen-house and magazine for faggots, and had a well.

All this was very uninviting; but the *tavernaro* and his wife, by degrees, showed such confidence in us, and at the same time such willingness to render us all the assistance in their power, that we were put in possession of all that it contained in the form of comestibles. These consisted of some maccaroni, three eggs, and one pigeon, to which was added the very worst wine I ever tasted in my life; which defect would not have been very severely felt had not the water proved still more detestable, so that a mixture was indispensable as a reciprocal

disguise for both potations. The table linen, coarse as it was, proved, when extracted from its hiding-place, of exquisite cleanliness; as did the sheets: and hunger and fatigue did all that was requisite to render our meal not only palatable, but savoury.

About an hour after our arrival, a messenger came from the first tavern to inform us of the safe arrival there of my carriage and servant, but of their inability to come farther that night on account of the fatigue of the horses. This was not unwelcome news; nor did I regret the impossibility of their joining us, when I considered the want of stables, and indeed the deficiency of every kind of accommodation, which our present residence laboured under.

We retired to lie down by turns in our clothes on the bed which the good people gave up to us, and passed the night with as much comfort as such short periods of repose admitted. Just before day-break the carriage arrived; and I took leave of our hosts, with a remuneration which, moderate as it was, proved in all probability the most bountiful they had ever received: they were not the less grateful for a

few doses of sulphate of quinine for the fever-stricken man, whom they harboured from mere charity. This was the day of intermission in his disorder, and he availed himself of it to crawl to the tavern-door and wish us a good journey with the rising sun. He looked at the medicine with an expression of hope, in which I was far from participating; and, as the only means of thanking us, pointed to what he probably deemed the most gratifying spectacle in the vicinity. This was the gloomy castle of Muro, whose light-coloured walls, just tipped by the reddening dawn, frowned in silent grandeur above the deep ravine along which the town, not visible from this spot, is constructed.

I cannot recollect to have ever beheld a more dreary landscape than that which unfolded itself round me at that particular moment. Interminable ranges of barren hills, rising behind each other, surrounded the spot; with no peculiar object to relieve their monotonous aspect but a dilapidated village, miscalled Bella, on a conical height about a mile from Muro.

This last town, supposed to stand on the site of the ancient Numistro, still boasts of an epis-

copal see, and contains five thousand souls. The castle, which we saw under such gloomy colours, claims the historian's notice through deeds of a congenial character. The beautiful and ill-fated Joan found within its walls the termination of her eventful destiny; and, if guilt is not atoned for by years of sorrow and repentance, underwent in that abode the merited punishment of her early crimes. Shortly after her removal hither by the order of the ungrateful and unrelenting usurper who had deprived her of her throne, she was strangled by two Hungarian soldiers despatched from Naples for that purpose.

The precincts of this edifice had been sullied, more than a century previous to this event, by a murder fully as atrocious, but attested by less authentic records. Henry of Suabia, youngest son of the Emperor Frederick II. by Isabella of England, who had been named to the inheritance of the island of Sicily, was likewise strangled in this castle through the dictate of his brother Conrad.

A considerable elevation, to which we ascended after quitting our resting-place, admitted a

more extended view of this portion of Basilicata, including, among some distant villages, the town of Picerno and the castle of Lago Pesole, of which I shall have to speak hereafter. The only specimens of verdure which caught the eye were a few holly-bushes of a very beautiful kind.

We stopped soon after to breakfast at a tavern called S. Fele, from being placed at the branching off of a road leading to a little town so named, which is seen in the distance on the left, and contains no less than five thousand three hundred inhabitants.

After remaining about an hour, we resumed our progress on a continued descent into a black and barren ravine, through which ran a small brook, which we crossed. An ascent on the opposite side, of no great duration or steepness, brought us to Atella, about eight miles from S. Fele.

This place, which is dignified with the name of town, is placed on the flank of a hill, at the foot of which a very abundant stream, brought from some distance along a subterranean channel, gushes from the soil with the

refreshing semblance of a primitive spring, turns a mill, and unites itself to the above-mentioned brook.

Atella boasts of ruined walls, and the openings which once were gates; but the interior presents a most miserable aspect, and the pavement is execrable. It contains fifteen hundred inhabitants.

Three miles farther stands the more considerable though less ancient town of Rionero, some portion of which does not present a much better appearance than Atella; but its population, amounting to ten thousand inhabitants, is industrious, so that the dirty streets are not without animation. It also contains some good houses; and the environs are furnished, not embellished, by vineyards and olive-trees, and several large villas.

Barile, the term of our peregrination, stands about two miles farther in a much better situation. Here we stopped, and found excellent accommodation in the mansion of the Prince of T—, whose agent had been taught to expect me, though not quite so early; the letter specifying the day of my arrival having been

delayed on its route, which accounted for our disappointments of the preceding day. Our reception was all we could have hoped for, thanks to the condition of the house, and the noble owner's friendly directions; and within its hospitable walls we fixed our abode for some days.

It is very unusual in any part of the Neapolitan dominions to find towns placed so near to each other as those of Atella, Rionero, Barile, Rapolla, and Melfi: still more uncommon is it for the public road to be conducted through them, as is the case with the three first, and it can only be accounted for by their comparatively modern origin.

These five are placed on a gently curved line, of little more than eight miles' extension, on the eastern slope of Mount Volture. This singular mountain, of whose volcanic composition no doubt can be entertained, rises, detached and isolated, from the chain of the Apennines, which here terminates on the confines of Basilicata and Apulia, marked by the course of the river Ofanto, and is seen at a considerable distance from all parts of this last province,

though its elevation does not exceed three thousand feet. Two higher peaks rise above the general mass, which is likewise sufficiently broken and indented to give a fantastic and picturesque character to the outline.

The slope at the foot of which the above-mentioned three towns are situated, is in no part very steep, and cultivation has nearly reached its summit; while the south and western sides are covered with thick forests. The northern flank, which overlooks Melfi, displays a mixture of cultivation and wildness, rendering its aspect very beautiful from that town; which, though designated as placed upon it, stands, in fact, on a detached eminence, divided from Volture by a deep but very narrow valley.

Barile, from which, having secured such comfortable quarters, I proposed making excursions in the environs, may be said to belong more properly to the mountain itself; and, standing on a more elevated site than either Atella or Rionero, enjoys not only a much more extensive view over the flats of Capitanata as far as Mount Garganus and the sea,

but shares, with this advantage, that of a salubrious but cold temperature.

It is, nevertheless, a wretched place, containing a population of three thousand souls, which has been gradually decreasing for several years. This must be ascribed to the natural idleness of the natives, who seem to have inherited it with some of the wild ferocity of their ancestors, who were Albanians. These had originally settled at Melfi at the time when several colonies from Epirus were encouraged to settle in various parts of the kingdom of Naples; but their wild, and probably contentious habits, and perhaps the difference of religion, rendering them not very pleasant visitors or inmates, they by degrees were either expelled, or withdrew, from their first residence, and established themselves in the recesses excavated by the hand of nature along the whole of this base of the mountain, including the territory of Atella and Rionero. They are converted to the use of cellars at these two last towns; but many of them at Barile still serve for habitations to the natives, who all speak and understand the Albanian dialect, while a great por-

tion of the lower orders are acquainted with no other.

One of the principal families, by name Mazucca, boasts of being descended from one of seven warlike brothers who accompanied Scanderbeg from Epirus into this kingdom.

The inhabitants are chiefly employed in cultivating, in a very slovenly manner, a territory which yearly diminishes in extent and consequence; as the natives of the adjoining Rionero, whose habits of industry and activity offer a singular contrast to those of this idle race, have so increased in wealth and population within the last twenty years, that they are enabled to make frequent acquisitions from the territory of their improvident and lazy neighbours, who will ultimately become entirely dependent upon them for subsistence and support.

These last have sagacity enough to foresee this, but a strange mixture of pride and apathy combines to retain them in this state of deterioration: they seem, nevertheless, contented and happy, and to be of a peaceable and friendly disposition among themselves; though I should doubt their extending these feelings

towards their neighbours, whom they appear to hold in sovereign contempt.

The produce of the soil is chiefly wine, the town being surrounded by vineyards and a few olive-grounds; but the unremitting occupation of the majority of the inferior class consists in the fabrication of gunpowder, which, though strictly prohibited, is carried on in the most undisguised manner at all times in the caves that surround the town. Their love of sporting, and the inherent attachment to their muskets, which they always carry about with them, may account for this propensity. The inhabitants compensate for the deficiencies reproached to them by a reputation of probity and courage, which is admitted as justly merited.

There are few good houses in the place, among which that in which I resided stood pre-eminent for size and comparative magnificence. It was not originally a possession of the T— family, but was purchased by the great-grandfather of the present proprietor, whose son incurred considerable expense towards rendering it habitable according to the taste of his day; which, however, boasted of

little that would now be called ornamental. In a small square garden, accessible from the court-yard and an apartment on the ground-floor, a considerable volume of excellent water has been conducted, which not only serves for the domestic uses of the house, but has been so distributed through pipes and under-ground channels as to supply a variety of fountains, and likewise to assist in the childish exhibition of what is termed *giochi d'acqua*. These consist of a variety of objects and figures, of wood and tin, which, being by turns applied to the orifice of the tube, and put into motion by the force of the jet forced through it, go through numerous evolutions, enrapturing a large concourse of spectators admitted by special favour at the same time that I viewed this pastime, which terminated by a general aspersion from unseen reservoirs, the contents of which were suddenly forced upwards, in the form of a shower reversed, upon the curious and delighted multitude.

A person appointed for the purpose enjoys an annual stipend from the prince to keep the pipes in proper repair, and is the only indivi-

dual entrusted with the keys, and initiated in the arcana of the mechanism of the performance.

Another entertainment, which in my opinion was more deserving of the name, was a dramatic representation, exhibited by an assemblage of the more respectable inhabitants and their children, in a large magazine or storehouse, which in a few hours was cleared of several tons of corn, and transformed into a theatre. This was proposed with the good-natured intention of breaking through the monotony of the long autumnal evenings; but the piece was not expressly got up for the occasion, as it had been acted some months before, and the scenery and dresses had been preserved, as well as the parts remembered.

The performance was far above mediocrity, and, considering that most of the actors had never quitted their native place, might be looked upon as wonderful; but the most striking circumstance attending it was, that the whole population, who were admitted gratis, repaired to the playhouse completely armed, with their muskets loaded and their belts full of car-

tridges. When a deputation thus accoutred waited upon me to accompany me to the theatre, I thought at first that I ought to be grateful for what I erroneously looked upon as a personal honour; but I soon found that the custom was habitual; and, on my inquiring if there existed any grounded motive for such hostile precautions, I was answered in the negative, but that it was considered better to be always prepared.

. Whatever might have been the source of this custom, it struck me as characteristic of the Albanian origin of the people. I was shortly after invited to a very different specimen of their amusements, in the shape of a boar-hunt among the woods of Mount Volture. I partook of these sports, limiting my share in them to meeting the party at the spot appointed, which I much wished to investigate; but an account of which I shall defer to the period of a second visit, paid to these regions from Melfi soon afterwards.

CHAPTER III.

Excursion to Venosa.—The Castle.—Bust of Horace.—Origin of Venosa.—Church of the Holy Trinity.—Remarkable tombs.—Castle of Lago Pesole.—Antique sculpture.—Rapolla.—Melfi.—The Castle.—Fountains.—Geological collection.—Excursion to Mount Volture.—Monte Verde.—A resident Baron.—Craters in the mountain.—Convent of St. Michael.—Course of the Ofanto.—Grotte dell' Abbate Cesare.—Territory of Monticchio.—Value of timber.

I REMAINED rather more than a week at Barile, most hospitably entertained by the prince's agent, and treated with much attention by the principal inhabitants; during which time, the frequent recurrence of bad weather, and the difficulty of obtaining horses, precluded the possibility of undertaking many excursions I had projected: one of these, however, I was enabled to effect, to Venosa, which, as the birth-place of Horace, and for many other reasons, I was desirous of visiting.

There is a short road across the country from

Barile to this town, which curtails the distance to about eight miles: but I preferred a longer journey, hoping that, the road being good enough to admit of a carriage, some time might thereby be saved; in which I was mistaken.

I followed, for the first six miles, the continuation of the track which had brought me from Eboli, bearing, like all those constructed within the last hundred years, the name of *Via nuova*. It descends from the slopes of the Volture, on which Barile is situated, into the valley which receives the stream from Atella, and all those that pour their waters into it from the right and left. There is no change in the aspect of the country, which offers to the eye a succession of bare, though not barren hills, cultivated with corn wherever the rocky projections do not impede it, and furnished with patches of vines and scanty olive plantations in the sheltered ravines. The brook is crossed over a small bridge near a large tavern called La Rendina, from which it takes, or to which it gives, its name: this is shortly afterwards changed to Oliveto, an appellation it retains till it falls into the Ofanto, a few miles farther.

The course of the road is maintained as far as Ascoli; but from La Rendina several lateral branches deviate, on the left to Melfi, and on the right to Lavello, Canosa, and Venosa. That which I followed, in the direction of this last place, is carried along the edge of a slender rill, winding between two ridges of low unfertile hills of mean and even dismal aspect: it was here that I found how greatly I had erred in selecting what was called the carriage-road; which was so bad, and presented such repeated obstacles to the progress of three very weak mules hired at Melfi, that we found it in every respect more advantageous to alight and walk, whereby we gained nearly three quarters of an hour on our equipage.

Venosa, placed on a much higher level than the glen we had traversed, is reached by a long winding ascent, when the town breaks on the sight under a favourable point of view, chiefly due to the venerable aspect of its castle; which, though a complete ruin, exhibits such magnitude of dimensions, and regularity of construction, as to form a very striking feature in the landscape.

The town is seated on a perfectly flat, but not very extensive plain, beyond which a range of well formed and richly cultivated hills is seen, together with the distant towns of Maschito, Acerenza, and Forenza. On looking back the way we came, the peaks of Mount Volture, showing themselves above an intermediate line of mean eminences, have a much more picturesque and imposing appearance than when viewed from a nearer point, such as Barile or Melfi.

The walls of the city of Venosa have long since been levelled to the soil; but the gateways exist, and that which gave us entrance is close to the castle above-mentioned. This fabric was erected in the fifteenth century by Pirro del Balzo, Prince of Altamura and Venosa; and, although never completed, the general plan is distinct in the ruins. It was square, with a circular tower on a corresponding bastion at each angle, and surrounded by a deep moat with two drawbridges, one facing the exterior entrance of the town, and the other, leading to the large square on which the edifice is built, opposite an inner gateway that opens to

the principal street. A marble inscription records the founder's name, and is placed above the first bridge, together with an elaborately finished shield bearing the minute details of his emblazoned arms. It now belongs to the Prince of T—, and all that remains of the interior is used as a tavern and stables for muleteers and carriers.

The next object that struck me on pursuing my way into the town, was a bust on the top of a column of rough stone, with the words Ora . . . . Poet. Venus.—meant to remind the beholders that it represents the celebrated poet who was born there. The sculpture, which is much injured by time and weather, is of a rough coarse-grained stone, the features much defaced, the costume apparently a clerical habit of the middle ages, and the monument altogether discreditable to the skill of the artist, and the taste of whoever erected it.

No spot in the whole kingdom has so strongly excited the researches, and administered to the dissertations of antiquaries, as the town of Venosa. Besides the numerous observations contained in the works of Antonini, Corsignani,

Egizi, Pratilli, and others, Monsignor Lupoli, bishop of the diocese, has, under the title of *Iter Venusinum*, published a work of great erudition and research on the antiquities it contains, a mine which had probably been previously explored by Cimaglia in his "Antiquitates Venusinæ." These productions contain every document and every hypothesis which can elucidate the origin and history of this city, and record, besides, more than one hundred and fifty inscriptions found within its territory.

The reader will not expect me to decide whether it was founded by the Cananeans, Phenicians, Osci, Pelasgi, or Peligni; or whether Diomed, a Greek, built it, and called it from his mother's Latin name; or whether it belonged to Daunia or Lucania: I shall, therefore, limit my description to such objects as more particularly struck me during my short visit; the principal among which is a church and monastery dedicated to the Holy Trinity, erected, in 942, on the site of a temple of Hymen, by Gisulfus, Prince of Salerno, but greatly enlarged and repaired more than a century

afterwards by the celebrated Robert Guiscard, who prevailed on Nicholas II, as he returned from presiding over the Council of Melfi in 1059, to consecrate this edifice in person.

It belonged to the Benedictine order, and its occupiers, probably towards the close of the thirteenth century, undertook to add to it a church on a very extended scale; in the fabrication of which they employed all the materials of the adjoining amphitheatre, which, for magnitude and beauty of architecture, held a distinguished rank among the most noted of Roman edifices. This operation levelled the Roman work with the soil, and its outline is scarcely visible; but that which absorbed the materials that composed it, has never been completed: in its unfinished condition it nevertheless exhibits remains of a singular and not unskilful taste in architecture.

The walls of the whole building are entire, without any roof, and encircle a considerable space. Two low columns, with grotesque but elaborately finished capitals, point out the line of the lateral aisle; and one large pilaster, formed of several united pillars, resembling many of

the Gothic specimens in our English cathedrals, was probably one of four meant to support the dome or cupola: in a straight direction with this, a deep arched niche in the centre of the transversal wall was most likely intended to contain the altar. The stones have all been taken from the amphitheatre in their original form, and are placed, after the manner of the ancients, without any cement; which stamps the fabric with a character unusual to those of the middle ages. Several inscriptions on slabs of immense length are mixed with these, most of them placed with the letters downwards.

The ruin is imposing from its magnitude, and the regularity of its masonry; and its picturesque appearance is much enhanced by a plant of jessamine, the stem of which, about eight inches in diameter, has forced itself through the interstices of the wall, and covers its sides for a considerable distance with a profusion of foliage and flowers.

The date of the original structure does not appear well authenticated, but some more recent inscriptions record that it was withdrawn from the Benedictine order in the sixteenth

century, and given to that of St. John of Jerusalem, of which it became a commandery or baillage: some of the dignitaries who held it are buried in the adjoining church, which, in its simple and even rustic aspect, bears the marks of a remote origin. Two other sepulchres, contained within its precincts, offer no inconsiderable degree of historical interest, as inclosing the relics of personages celebrated in the early annals of the kingdom.' One is merely a marble chest and lid, without any ornament, placed in a niche in the wall, and filled with the bones of Robert Guiscard, and his elder brother William Ferrabrach, or Fier-à-bras, Drogon or Dreux, Humphrey, &c. all of whom possessed in the surrounding regions the different domains which their valorous usurpation wrested from the Greek possessors; which territories were afterwards united, together with still more extended acquisitions, into one principality, by the more politic and ambitious Guiscard.

The other tomb, on the opposite side of the church, is that of Alberada, a Lombard princess, first wife of the same Robert, and mother

to his eldest son Bohemund: it likewise consists of a simple marble chest, but is surmounted with a kind of Gothic scroll-work on the arch which covers it, and bears the following inscription:

"Guiscardi conjux, Aberarda, hâc conditur arcâ;
Si genitum quæris, hunc Canusinum habet."

The tenour of these lines proves the sepulchre to have been raised a considerable time after her decease, as it alludes to that of her son at Canosa, who died long after her, having been one of the principal heroes of the first crusade in Syria, where he had founded the principality of Antioch: he did not return to Italy till he had reached a very advanced period of life; it is indeed believed that he expired on board the vessel that conveyed him to his native land.

In the same church are two very large columns of some very fine and hard material, I should suppose basalt; but so thickly clad with repeated layers of stucco and whitewash, that it is impossible to ascertain the substance: they are surmounted by marble capitals of very good Roman workmanship. This is all that

the town of Venosa contains which can be considered entitled to notice; as I cannot include as such a quantity of fragments of sculptured lions of the most rude execution, probably relics of the lower empire, which protrude from walls and corners in all directions.

Venosa is reputed to be more affected with malaria than most of the surrounding towns; but the faces and complexions of the lower orders, particularly those of the females, were infinitely more healthy in appearance than at Barile, and some were remarkable for beauty and regularity of feature

Our way back to Barile was very tedious, owing to the incapacity of our mules and the badness of the roads, and we only reached it three hours after sunset; which circumstance put me out of conceit with a plan I had formed of going to the castle of Lago Pesole the next day.

This edifice, which is now possessed, with the territories of Melfi, by Prince Doria Pamfili, is ascertained to have been frequently resorted to by Frederick II. on his sporting expeditions, for which its position among

extensive forests was admirably adapted. This prince is even looked upon as having erected it for that express purpose; but it is probable that it was originally raised by the Normans, and subsequently improved and ornamented by him, when he selected it as a temporary residence. Many of the embellishments thus bestowed upon it, exist to the present day in the various forms of columns, door-slabs, arches, &c.; which render the quantity of marble it still contains very considerable, and not less remarkable for the peculiar style of taste and execution which distinguishes them, but which, not having been able to visit the spot in person, I am unable to describe, as the accounts I received of these monuments was given in a very confused manner.

It is placed on a conical hill, isolated from the surrounding ridges, and of not inconsiderable elevation, which makes it a singular and imposing object from a considerable distance: while its name was derived from a small lake, now a stagnant pool, just beneath it, in which tradition has noted some floating islands, probably masses of weeds and decayed vegetation.

It has survived the devastations which time has been allowed to commit on most edifices of a contemporary date, which have not been saved by their sacred character, and continues to be used as a capacious and commodious habitation. The presence of its illustrious proprietor, at the time I was projecting a visit to it, proved one of the obstacles in the way of such an excursion, besides the others above-mentioned.

Before I quitted Barile, I was much gratified by the inspection of a specimen of very fine antique sculpture, contained in the very mansion which I inhabited, but the existence of which I was only made acquainted with on the day previous to my departure. It was a large trough of white Parian marble, representing in alto relievo the history of Achilles. The heads were all defaced, but the figures and drapery in good preservation; and the execution is of so superior a quality, that it approaches to the finest relics of Grecian workmanship. The fourth side is turned against the wall of the vault or magazine in which it is very injudiciously placed; and, the whole being too

ponderous to be moved without considerable labour and exertion, it was not possible to obtain a sight of it. Another bas relief, which has been adapted as a lid to it, is of very inferior execution, but less injured by time. It represents a sacrifice, and was probably a sepulchral monument placed upright. On the face of the sarcophagus are engraved the words "Metilia Torquata," which appear of a more recent date, and were probably added when it was adapted to the reception of the dead, as some of the letters (in order to preserve the regularity of their line) have been cut upon the shield of Achilles.

I could never obtain any more satisfactory account of this beautiful relic, than that it was brought to its present station by one of the Prince of T—'s ancestors, from the church of the neighbouring town of Atella, where it had been from time immemorial. The difficulty and expense of having it transported to Naples are sufficient reasons for its continuance in its actual state of obscurity.

I quitted Barile after a residence of ten days, and having, during a short previous excursion to

Melfi, become acquainted with an inhabitant of that city, availed myself of his kind offer of hospitality.

I sent my carriage and servant along the road by Rendina, already described, and proceeded to Melfi on foot, by a path not extending quite four miles in distance. The town, though so near to Barile, is not visible from it, as it is only from the summit of an opposite eminence, divided by a deep ravine, that it shows itself with considerable effect, and holds out a promise of importance and magnitude which a nearer investigation by no means verifies. The track I followed wanders by some vineyards, afterwards through a thicket of stunted oaks, and over a broken surface of uneven ground, till it brings one above a precipitous gully, on the reverse of which stand the scattered habitations that constitute what is still called the town of Rapolla; which was once an episcopal see, now united to that of Melfi, and contains at present about three thousand inhabitants.

A little rivulet dashes through the dell under the town, and we crossed it after descending

along a succession of the same little caverns that characterise all the villages of this district, and are here used as wine-cellars. The site is wild, and perhaps a little dreary; but I should prefer it to Barile as a residence. I went through it at a pace somewhat accelerated by the threatening appearance of a rainy sky; and confess that the only objects that arrested my attention, were a number of Latin inscriptions, which induced me to suspect that Rapolla contains a poet destined to waste his sweetness on the desert air. Of their merit the following specimens may give some idea.

On the door of a wine cavern:

BACCHUS AD VIATOREM.

Siste, Viator: hìc mordaces comprime curas.
Est hìc dulce merum; tu bibe, lætus eris.
Si fractum sentis per longo tramite corpus,
Est hìc dulce merum; tu bibe, firmus eris.
Læthalis verò si morbus presserit artus,
Est hìc dulce merum; tu bibe, sanus eris.

On an apothecary's shop:

Si dolor, febris, aut malè Venus te excruciat,
Huc propera. En! opium, Chinaque, Mercurius!

Melfi is scarcely a mile from Rapolla; but the steepness and extreme roughness of the water-worn path which leads to it, renders its access, on this side, very fatiguing: like most others in a commanding and elevated situation, this town loses somewhat of its majestic appearance on a nearer approach to it. It is encircled by crumbling walls which show more breaches than gates; though these last are not few, and most of them are illustrated by high-sounding names and pompous inscriptions. The streets are narrow, ill paved, and dirty; and most of them, as the town is built on the side of a steep acclivity, are impracticable to a carriage. Many of the houses, however, have a respectable appearance, which they owe more to the solidity and simple style of their masonry than to the magnitude of their dimensions. The natives honour these habitations with the name of Norman or French; but it is evident that their construction is too recent to justify this appellation. All those which have any pretensions to regularity present a singular feature in an inscription extending along the whole front between the ground and first floor, recording

Engraved from an Original Drawing by W. Westall, A.R.A.

THE CASTLE OF MELFI.

the name of the founder or proprietor, with a variety of extraneous matter. The letters being large, and sculptured in high relief on a hard stone susceptible of considerable polish, produce the appearance of a frieze or cornice, which has a very good effect.

The principal object at Melfi is its castle, which, though in many of its parts fallen to decay, and in others restored in very bad taste, retains an aspect of venerable and imposing grandeur. It is surrounded by a fosse, now converted into gardens, and was entered by a drawbridge, the chains of which still serve as a guard or parapet to that of stone which has supplied its use.

This edifice stands at the very uppermost extremity of the town, from which it is separated by a kind of platform commanding a view of the opposite slopes of Mount Volture. Considerable historical interest is attached to it, as the principal, and probably the first fortress built by the Normans after their conquest of all this portion of the kingdom.

The sons of Tancred of Hauteville, and their companions in arms, constructed Melfi, and de-

signated it as the capital of the various sovereignties into which they had divided their conquests; and within the walls of its castle they held periodical meetings for the purpose of discussing and regulating the interests of their military confederacy; and, subsequently, more than one council of the church was held within their precincts. But it appears, at the same time, to have been more particularly considered as the principal town of the domains that had been allotted to Arduinus, one of these warlike brothers.

The extent of this fabric is considerable; and even that portion, comparatively small, which has been retained for the habitation of its successive proprietors, affords much accommodation. It now belongs, with a large adjunct of territory, to Prince Doria Pamfili, whose principal agent resides there, with many assistants, to carry on the operations of what is called administering the vast estates he possesses in this vicinity. These, which once belonged to a branch of the Caraccioli family, descending from the celebrated Sergianni, the imperious and ill-fated favourite of Joan II, were, after

a temporary confiscation to the crown, conferred by Charles V. on the no less illustrious Andrea Doria.

There is a very handsome apartment reserved solely for the use of the noble proprietors when they visit their domains, which the present possessor, who usually resides at Rome, was in the act of doing for the first time in his life while I was at Melfi.

These rooms are fitted up in the costly and substantial style which characterized the beginning of the eighteenth century. Among a variety of very indifferent paintings, I discovered a portrait, which, though much damaged, was distinguished not only by the touch of a superior artist, but might, from the costume and character of the countenance, have been that of the great Doria himself; but it was evidently regarded with indifference, having been placed over a dingy chimney in the secretary's office.

The large hall in which the meetings of the Norman confederacy were held, and which afterwards witnessed the Councils of 1089 and 1100, has been converted into a theatre, the

wooden ruins of which offer a strange contrast to the pointed arches and massive walls of the building. Most of the square towers are in a state of dilapidation; but one, reputed to have been the dungeon, remains entire, and in its height and solidity affords an impressive specimen of the general structure.

At less remote periods of history, Melfi was considered a military post of importance during the various contests which occurred in the kingdom for its possession. In 1528, it underwent a short but calamitous siege, directed against it by a portion of Lautrec's army, commanded by Pietro Navarro, captain of the famous *bande nere*. It was taken by assault; three thousand of its inhabitants massacred; and Sergianni Caraccioli, its feudal lord, who had defended it with great bravery for Charles V, retired to the castle, where he capitulated with several other distinguished warriors. Afterwards, having neither been liberated nor rewarded by his sovereign, he entered the service of France, and lost his rank and estates in the realm, which were conferred upon Andrea Doria.

This is the nobleman who is recorded by

Brantome, in his *Hommes Illustrès Etrangers*, as Le Duc de Melfe.

The next object of curiosity in the town is the cathedral, or rather its high tower, which, according to an inscription on a marble slab incrusted in its walls, was erected by William, son of Roger, (the founder of the kingdom,) in 1151. This fabric, though of good masonry, presents nothing very remarkable except its height, being like most of our old English belfries, with small Saxon arches for windows. The adjoining church contains a very richly gilt and carved ceiling, added to it in modern times by one of its bishops, who likewise repaired the front of the edifice, and built the *vescovado*, or episcopal residence, in a style of magnificent regularity, and on a scale of dimensions little suited to the present size and importance of the town, which only contains seven thousand inhabitants. At the foot of the hill on which it is situated, just outside of one of its gates, are established the different fountains which supply its waters. Their position is not very convenient to the inmates, but the level of the water prevented a higher station.

They have recently been repaired and added to; and have very judiciously been adapted, according to their forms, and the greater or less abundance of their respective streams, to the various and separate uses which may be required of them: so that one is solely for watering animals, another exclusively reserved to the drink of the natives, another furnished with a larger supply for domestic wants, and several, much larger, merely for washing.

I never before observed this peculiar mode of distribution, which the abundance of the element has allowed of; it gives a pleasing character to this extremity of the city. From hence the new track, meant to communicate from Melfi with the great road from Naples into Apulia, is commenced, which will render a journey to the capital much more rapid and easy than under the present form. The prospect from this spot is worth remarking; as a rapid brook, named the Melfa, runs meandering through masses of fresh cultivation under the lower flanks of Mount Volture, here beautifully diversified by olive-groves, vineyards, and gardens, and enlivened by villas and farm-houses.

To the geologist, that mountain and the detached hill of Melfi offer attractions of peculiar interest and singularity; the town being built on a volcanic mass of heterogeneous composition, presenting a curious mixture of grey lava containing an abundance of lazulites of various hues, intersected by strata of travertine, upon alternate layers of ashes, alluvial sand, tufa, and stalactites in a very decomposed state.

I was much interested by the sight of a collection of the general mineral and geological productions of these environs, which has been formed, during many years' residence at Melfi, by a retired priest deeply versed in those sciences. This assemblage of specimens is so curious and varied, that I doubly regret the inabilities under which I labour to give a detailed and technical account of it.

Melfi has the reputation of being subject to malaria, or something akin to it, which shows itself in the form of intermittent autumnal fevers. The exterior appearance of the natives is nevertheless much more healthy than that of the inhabitants of Barile. The Melfitans themselves deny the existence of this evil; but I

must observe, in support of it, that on rising every morning I found the linen and clothes by my bedside as saturated by damp as if they had been exposed to the action of a heavy mist, and I have no doubt that the position of Mount Volture, exactly to the south of the city, and separated from it by a deep and narrow glen full of rivulets, may greatly contribute to this cause of insalubrity.

The population appears lively, industrious, and active, though there are no particular manufactures: many of the inhabitants deal in cattle and wine, which last I found somewhat less sweet and heavy than the produce of the surrounding towns: it constitutes an abundant article of commerce with the whole of the adjoining province of Capitanata, where, under the name of *Vino di Melfi*, it is sold and held in general use.

The day after I arrived at Melfi was almost entirely devoted to a second visit to the interior recesses of the mountain, having made a previous excursion to it from Barile, on which occasion the weather was so boisterous as to place great impediments in the way of my

researches, and almost to convince me of the plausibility of the reason alleged by Livy for the defeat of the Romans at Cannæ: he says that, although at least thirty miles distant from this mountain, the impetuosity of the wind which was generated in the interior valleys, and which blew directly from it in their faces, was so powerful as to overpower them.

I can only bear testimony to the extraordinary effects of a sort of hurricane, which seemed to issue from the flanks of the interior craters, and rushed through the defiles that unite one with another, with such frightful potency as to render all progress against it quite impracticable at times, and which appeared the more unaccountable from raging with such violence in spaces entirely surrounded by high ridges and sheltered by extensive forests: scarcely five minutes elapsed without some alarming crash being heard, occasioned by the fall of some ancient beech or oak tree, which frequently occurred near enough to threaten danger as well as obstacles to our movements.

My second excursion, however, took place under the most favourable auspices, and afford-

ed every opportunity of enjoying the very peculiar aspect presented by the regions of this ancient volcano.

From Barile I had gradually ascended what may be termed its exterior flanks, to a considerable height, and then dived into the obscurity of its nearly impenetrable forests; but from Melfi the way was less arduous.

It commences at the gate of the fountains, and, after crossing the Melfa, bears a little to the left, skirting the base of the mountain, and passing by several villas in unsheltered positions, among low coppices of chestnut-trees. The country to the right exhibits a gently inclined plane, covered with wheat stubble, and sloping to the bed of the Ofanto, which runs at no great distance in a scanty stream under some high but bare mountains; on the most elevated of which stands the little town of Monte Verde beyond the river, which here divides the two provinces of Basilicata and Principato Ultra. This place was once an episcopal see, but is now reduced to a population of fifteen hundred souls. There is a baronial mansion, the remnant of feudal grandeur; and, what

is more remarkable, it contains a baron who makes it his habitual residence.

I was much interested, perhaps I should not say amused, by the account of this gentleman's mode of existence, which depends entirely on the produce of his corn-fields, and the greater or less advantages he derives from its sale. He was represented to me as a person of amiable disposition and highly cultivated mind, whose only relaxation in this secluded spot was the performance of dramas, in which he and his family bore the principal parts, and of which the whole population of Monte Verde were the spectators; as their next neighbours, the inhabitants of Melfi, though usually favoured with invitations, and only seven miles distant, found the labours of the road too arduous to be undertaken, even with the prospect of such compensation. The baron's numerous offspring, among which the females were all married to various proprietors inhabiting the town, boasted of a sufficient share of talent and acquirements to soar into the regions of operatic melodrama as well as comedy.

To return to my excursion, the road, after

we had lost sight of Melfi, winding somewhat round to the south, led us, at the expiration of an hour, to an opening in the mountain, through which the cool and clear streams, which we had noted as running from that spot, find their way into the flatter country, and the majestic forests, that clothe all the inner regions of the volcano, begin to show themselves. We followed the path which enters this dark labyrinth of foliage; leaving in the distance the town of Carbonara, situated in Principato Ultra, behind Monte Verde; and more to the right, in the plain of Capitanata, that of Candela, nearly its equal in dimensions.

The precipitous sides of the numerous craters that have been scooped out by repeated dateless eruptions, are entirely covered with trees, whose growth would appear to identify their age with that of the soil which produces them: they consist chiefly of beech and oak, of which the former is the most frequent and of the largest dimensions, while the underwood exhibits the usual varieties, among which the thorn predominates. I have seen many more remarkable specimens of timber in our nor-

thern regions; but nowhere have I observed trees of considerable proportions collected together in such numbers, displaying such beauty in their form, or such robust vegetation in their foliage.

These craters communicate with each other by large openings, which, covered as they are with thickets, are scarcely perceptible to the wanderer among their intricate sinuosities, and a correct idea of which can only be obtained by a bird's-eye view of the whole excavation from a very elevated point. The lower parts of these basins have some level surfaces, from which the woods have occasionally been cleared away, to afford more space for pasture, and to erect a few huts, which, with a monastery placed in the widest of the craters, constitute the only habitations which this wild district boasts of.

This last contains a community of Franciscan monks, and is dedicated to St. Michael: it is singularly situated, as if stuck on to one of the steepest slopes, the face of which is broken by volcanic rocks of the most grotesque form, overhanging the building in a frightful manner, and in other parts rising abruptly into

sharp and slender pinnacles and cones, but interspersed with the richest vegetation to the very summit of the mountain. Just below the convent are two lakes, the smallest of which is separated from it by a gentle declivity covered with walnut and chestnut trees: several springs gush from the rocks at its base, and from these, united to others rising from the reputed fathomless bottom of the pool, its supplies are derived.

A ruined church, called Sant' Ippolito, probably the original foundation, stands on a flat intersected by the channel which conveys the superfluous waters of the smaller lake into the adjoining cavity which forms the second, the dimensions of which are nearly double. From this, another rivulet winds through the most intricate portions of the forest, receiving other springs; among which is one of a mineral nature, called, from its salubrious qualities, Acqua Santa; and finally works its way out of the interior of the mountain at the opening which had admitted us, and falls into the Ofanto.

The monastery offers nothing remarkable except its antiquity and position; and the monks,

who had certainly not included cleanliness in the number of their vows, seemed to take particular pride in the neglect and decay which characterize their abode.

This spot, probably one of the most deserted in the kingdom, is much resorted to on the patron's festal day; the last celebration of which had been mournfully signalized by the death of one of the votaries, who, stimulated probably by too copious a libation in honour of the archangel, had imprudently ventured alone into one of the unmanageable punts used to take up the lines and nets, and, having lost his balance, was precipitated into the smaller pool, from which his body, probably from the want of proper means, had never been recovered.

The features which distinguish the scenery of this secluded corner of the realm, are as beautiful and original in their aspect, as they are sombre and even awful in their character, presenting in their assemblage all the appendages which the imagination is wont to attach to the gloomy institutions of La Trappe or St. Bruno.

The hand of man was in the act of despoil-

ing the view of some of its most striking ornaments, by hewing down a considerable portion of the trees on the bank facing the convent, for the purpose of restoring the soil to cultivation. This crater, by far the most extensive, is placed at the north-east side of Mount Volture, that is, below the ridge that rises behind Barile; while the next in size, to which I had proceeded from Melfi, is at the opposite or south-western extremity. This is by no means so deep; and besides its woods, which are not so thick, boasts of nothing worthy of remark except the scanty ruins of a castle, the foundation of which is attributed to the Normans. These relics are inconsiderable, consisting of half a square tower, a portion of wall, and a vault with an aperture at the top, probably a cistern. Its situation, however, admirably adapted it to the purpose of a fortress, or watch-tower, to guard, and at the same time overlook, all the adjoining country.

The view towards the interior of the volcano, that is, to the east and south, is limited by the dark clothing of woods which entirely cover it: but to the west, the eye wanders

over a succession of mountain ridges, rising above one another, and defined with such clearness, that one might, in looking over their extension, fancy oneself glancing over a minutely executed map. In the same direction, in a deep narrow glen worn by the workings of its waters, flows the Ofanto, whose meandering course may be traced for a very considerable distance towards its source, with the successive roots of the above-mentioned mountains springing from its bed, which, flat and sandy, bears the marks of the sudden swells to which this river is subject through the melting of the snows or from any sudden rains. It here divides the province of Basilicata from that of Principato Citra, acting the same part a little lower with regard to that of Principato Ultra, and, farther still, forming the boundary line of Capitanata.

The hill that rises just opposite that which supports the castle, bears very much the same form and character, though less thickly furnished with trees. This appearance of identity is indeed so strong as to induce the belief that it originally belonged to the mass of the Vol-

ture, and was disjoined from it in the lapse of centuries by the operation of the stream. On the left shore of the Ofanto, but much elevated above its level, stands the town of Calitri, with a population of four thousand inhabitants.

The high peaks of the most distant mountains were already covered with snow, fallen about a week before my visit; and were pointed out to me as those that rise above Nusco, that is, just opposite La Valva and Laviano, beyond the Sele, the source of which river is not very distant from that of the Ofanto.

Descending from this ruin, and following a more northern direction along the same ridge, I was conducted to some caves, known in the country by the name of Grotte dell' Abbate Cesare, and distinguished as having been the resort of the noted Cæsar Borgia when deprived of his ill-acquired possessions and wealth, and forced to conceal himself from danger and pursuit. This tradition, which has no foundation in the history of that extraordinary personage, is evidently a vulgar error; and a better authenticated origin for this name may

easily be found, by referring to the administration of the Spanish viceroys at the end of the seventeenth century, when a notorious brigand, called Cesare Ricciardi, originally a priest, and from that circumstance retaining his ecclesiastic designation, was, after a chequered career of crime and adventure, outlawed, and finally taken in this very province of Basilicata, where he had concealed himself in the recesses of Mount Volture and other wild unfrequented districts.

These excavations attract notice at a little distance, from various masses of rock heaped upon each other in rather a singular manner, though of no very great elevation. They stand isolated from any other similar compositions, on a smooth surface of some extent. These grottoes, originally formed by the hand of nature, are numerous, though not very capacious; and the two principal caves communicate by a tortuous and narrow passage, apparently artificial. On a minute investigation of the surrounding locality, other apertures are found, which have scarcely any exterior mark to arrest the attention: one of these is placed

just above the river Ofanto, with so precipitous a descent to it, that no access can be attained from its banks, but only from the impending ridge. The roots of a large ilex, singularly interwoven with the strata of rocks, afforded me the means, not without much difficulty and even danger, of penetrating into a cavern most admirably adapted, from this difficulty of approach, to become the secure retreat of a bandit. A winding passage, so low as to preclude all progress except upon all-fours, and which therefore I had not the power of exploring without a light, seemed to lead from this den in the direction of the larger cavities, and probably established a communication between them. The tufa, of which they are formed, differs from the other rocks of Mount Volture, being full of stalactites.

When these gloomy forests and their impenetrable retreats were still more unfrequented and secluded than they now are, no spot could be found more favourable to the abode of a fugitive; and even in less remote times they have been used for similar purposes.

I was shown, in another part of the woods,

the position of a *pagliara*, or thatched hut, in which several individuals, who had there assembled during a few days for the purpose of sporting, allowed themselves to be burned alive by a much smaller number of brigands, who had waylaid them, and vowed them to destruction from revenge against two of the party, who in a former encounter had killed some of their gang. This had occurred within the last ten years.

The inequalities of the soil, entirely shaded by high trees and overgrown with brushwood, and the multiplicity of narrow paths worn by the cattle driven to feed in the forest, render a march through this kind of labyrinth a matter of such perplexity, that none but the most experienced individuals can venture to guide a stranger through the mazes which it presents; and I observed my conductors sticking boughs from different trees in many passes, through which we were to retrace our progress on our return.

This singular region, comprehending all the forest and grazing land included within the circuit of Mount Volture, is called Monticchio: it

belongs to government, and has long since been assigned to the use of the Constantinian order of knighthood. The territory is let to a small number of tenants for terms of six or seven years, and brings in a rent of fourteen hundred ducats. The lessees repay themselves, and reap their profit, in various ways; such as allowing cattle to feed, at stated times, for so much a hundred, distributed over the surface according to the quality of the food best suited to the different species of animals. Besides this, the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, by paying a yearly stipend, obtain the right of taking away as much fuel daily as a horse or mule can carry at one load; but, in doing this, they must abstain from cutting any timber above a certain thickness, and, besides this, content themselves with what is furnished by the broken boughs or fallen trees: the quantity of these last, however, renders such labour easy.

Some portions of the soil, indeed, are cultivated with different sorts of grain, but these are not frequent; while other districts are fenced off for pasturage, and let by the acre.

The shepherds that attend these flocks are allowed a *rotolo* (two pounds) and a half of bread every day, with a due proportion of salt and oil as seasoning: they receive, moreover, two ducats every month, a sheepskin cloak every year, and a daily bowl of fresh milk during the two first spring months.

I was induced through mere curiosity to inquire what sum the largest tree, beech or oak, might fetch by sale, and was answered that no demand had ever been made for such an article, but that fifteen carlins would probably be considered a fair price: the difficulty of transporting so large a body of timber to any distance, however small, must account for the apparent mediocrity of the charge. But I was afterwards informed, that in other parts of the same province, which, notwithstanding the general nakedness of its surface, contains several very extensive forests, where the vicinity of towns might probably increase the value of the timber, a large tree is rarely sold for two ducats. Among these wide-spreading woods, those of Lago Pesole, belonging to Prince Doria, cover thirty thousand *moggie*,

or acres, more than double the territory of Monticchio; and those of Santa Sofia, the property of my host the Prince of T—, are nearly as large.

After wandering the whole of a day, the beauty of which made such an employment doubly delightful, among the wild regions of Monticchio, I returned to Melfi with some regret.

CHAPTER IV.

Route from Melfi into Apulia.—View of Melfi.—Canosa.—Water-tanks.—Castle.—Cathedral.—Tomb of Bohemund.—Early history of Canosa.—Ancient Sepulchres.—Visit to Castel del Monte.—Description of the fabric.—The river Ofanto.—The field of Cannæ.—Cerignola.—Foggia.—Improvements effected there.—Return to the capital.—Val di Bovino.—The town of Bovino.—Ill consequences of farming the posts.—Ariano.

During my stay in Melfi, I lodged in the house of a rich proprietor, whose hospitality was displayed in rather a less overpowering manner than usual: he placed no obstacles in the way of my visiting the mountain; and did not object to my preferring my early night's rest to the entertainment offered by the theatre, which he attended regularly every evening.

The apartment allotted to me was commodiously, and even luxuriously furnished; but it did not appear that any of the family considered a single bed as insufficient for the reception

of three persons; for when I retired on the first night I found no other preparations for my companion and servant, who were ushered into the room at the same time, so that I found myself compelled to inquire if additional accommodation could not be obtained. It was readily granted, but had evidently not been contemplated as a matter of necessity, or even convenience, and accordingly no provision had been made.

The road from Melfi into Apulia, which I followed, quits that town at the gate of the fountains, being the only egress practicable for a carriage: it then turns suddenly to the right, after crossing the Melfa, which, after winding a few miles, continues to run in the ravine: we went through this gully to ascend an opposite hill.

From this elevation, the castle seen in its whole extent, and succeeded by the cathedral and principal edifices of the town, detaches itself in the most picturesque manner from the more distant bank of the Volture, whose double peak terminates the landscape on that side, while the windings of the stream among patches of rich vegetation and verdant gardens form a suitable foreground to the picture.

After ascending some time, we took an easterly direction on a gentle descent over a most dreary piece of waste ground, with no object to break the monotony of its surface, except the skull of a brigand, exposed in an iron cage at the extremity of a long pole: the features were no longer to be discerned; but a profusion of fine flaxen hair, still adhering to the skull, waved in the breeze through the grating which contained it. This had been one of Zambrosi's band, executed some years back, at an early age, for crimes too numerous and atrocious to bear recital.

The declivity led us to a bridge over the Olivento, into which the Melfa falls at no great distance from this spot; which is likewise but little removed from the tavern of La Rendina, mentioned in my excursion to Venosa. We had, in fact, reached the high road which runs in a northern direction to Ascoli, and thence joins the great Apulian communication; but we speedily quitted it for a track formed by cart wheels, but advancing no better claim to the name of road. It was, however, far from bad, the soil being dry and free from stones, and running parallel with the course of the

Ofanto, showing itself at the distance of less than a mile by a line of tamarisks and trees of higher growth: these, with a few scattered wild and stunted pear-trees, were the only specimens of vegetation visible in this landscape, which, in every respect, presented a most striking contrast to that which surrounds the Volture. Here a perfect flat of about two miles in breadth, totally uncultivated, and bearing nothing but thistles, stretched before us in a most wearisome vista between two low banks of clay not worthy the name of hills. The farm-houses were of more substantial structure and larger dimensions than in the more mountainous district, and their flat roofs indicated a warmer and drier climate.

We entered Apulia, that is, the Provincia of Bari, about ten miles from Melfi, and about as many from Canosa, leaving the town of Lavello on an eminence to the left.

We stopped to bait at a large masseria and tavern, the property of the see of Melfi; from which, on our right, within a recess formed by some higher and uneven ground, we could see, about seven miles distant, the episcopal town of Minervino, containing seven thousand inhabit-

ants, whose extensive line of walls, broken by large towers, and terminated by a castle, presented an imposing aspect.

After a rest of two hours, we resumed our progress towards Canosa, which showed itself at some distance, and the appearance of which improved considerably on drawing nearer to it. We entered this town about four o'clock, after passing several wells, or rather tanks, which, though nearly a mile from the town, afford to the inhabitants the only supply of water they can reckon upon. They are constructed in an oblong shape, and rise four or five feet above the surface of the soil in the shape of a very flat arch, covered with large slabs of stone neatly overlapping each other like a roof on either side. Several flights of steps lead up to square apertures in the centre, through which the water is drawn up in buckets, and distributed by channels into long narrow troughs running along the whole fabric; the dimensions of which, added to the regularity and solidity of its masonry, entitle it to the rank of an architectural structure.

I was provided with letters of recommendation for Canosa, but resolved to try the

chance of an inn before I availed myself of them, and considered myself fortunate when our driver stopped at the door of a clean-looking habitation, having on its sign "Locanda, Trattoria, e Taverna del Leone;" and though the nature of the accommodation it afforded could only be applied to the first of these titles, it was above mediocrity, and the remaining necessary appendages were obtained in the course of a couple of hours, during which I had leisure to walk through the town. I was informed that it contained ten thousand inhabitants, though Giustiniani's Topographical Dictionary gives it only half that number, and its general aspect indicates a smaller population.

It is seated on the slope of an abrupt but not very considerable eminence, on which are placed, as usual, the remains of its feudal castle. These consist of the whole exterior range of walls and towers; the interior having been gutted, and serving now as a fold for cattle. The walls are remarkable for the immense size and regularity observable in the lower courses of the stones, which were, perhaps, taken from some ancient Roman building, probably the amphi-

theatre. There is also a peculiarity in the curtains, which extend from tower to tower, and are convex, or, in fact, so many segments of a circle. The balustrades belonging to the windows of these towers are of a fine white stone resembling marble, and, being almost all entire, give to the whole structure somewhat of a less dilapidated aspect than most others of the same nature.

The houses in the town of Canosa are of good masonry, and constructed with the fine even-grained material above-mentioned, which is the case with most of the towns in the flat or eastern portion of Apulia. Many of these buildings were new, and as many unfinished. The streets are wide and paved with large flags; and the population wears the aspect of health, and the exterior of good humour; in both which they differed from that of the districts I had recently quitted: nevertheless, the place is reported to be subject to malaria.

The cathedral, the first object I visited, stands at the southern extremity of a wide street that runs from one end of the town to the other: it is low, but remarkable from the singular Orien-

tal character of its exterior architecture, chiefly produced by clusters of small cupolas like those on a Turkish bath, and which are said to be anterior to the time of the Normans. The effect alluded to has, nevertheless, being greatly injured by a low square belfry of modern and very incongruous taste and execution.

The dimensions of the interior are contracted, but it contains several objects worth notice: among these must be reckoned an ancient pulpit, or *ambone*, of carved stone, and a chair of similar material, the form and ornaments of which have almost an Hindostanee look.

Many large granite pillars supporting the arches, and surmounted by Roman capitals of very inferior sculpture, are likewise remarkable; but six verd antique columns, near eighteen feet in height and two in diameter, constitute articles of real value. These were, undoubtedly, furnished by the remains of the ancient Canusinum, celebrated in antiquity for the richness and multitude of its architectural and sculptural monuments. An object less precious in its materials, but more singular from its style, is to be found in the tomb of Bohemund,

eldest son of Robert Guiscard. It is situated in a small area or court opening from one of the lateral chapels, and rests against the outward wall of the church itself.

This edifice, diminutive as it is, presents an eccentric, and not inelegant specimen of the taste which prevailed in the age that gave it birth. Its sides, composed of oblong slabs of white marble disposed of in an octagonal form, support a frieze and cornice of the same substance; above which rises an octagonal tiled roof, terminating in a little cupola, resting on very low pillars which admit the light between their interstices, the interior having no windows. The doors are two sheets of bronze, with engraved ornaments of a circular form and eastern design, and bear, moreover, numerous Latin metrical inscriptions in honour of the hero whose remains they are said to inclose. One of these is a literal repetition of that on the tomb of his mother, Alberada, at Venosa; and another records the construction of the belfry at Melfi, by Roger (first king of Sicily, cousin to Bohemund). This event, according to the inscription on the belfry itself, took place

in 1153; and, in that case, the sepulchral monument of Tasso's hero, or at least its bronze doors, could only have been raised forty years after his decease, which occurred in 1111. His bones are supposed to be contained in a marble chest within the little fabric; but many conflicting opinions exist as to the spot where he expired: some maintaining that it was at Antioch; others at Canosa; while others assert that he died at sea on his return from Syria, and that his remains were consigned to the deep.

So much for the modern state of Canosa: its more ancient celebrity under the various names of Canusinum, Canusia, and Canosa, is frequently referred to by the Latin historians; and, like most other cities in Daunia, its foundation was attributed to Diomed, the head on its coins being looked upon as his.

In the year 456 of the foundation of Rome, Canusium was subjugated to its sway, together with many other of the Apulian states; and it remained faithful to the Republic even after the rout at Cannæ, which gave to the inhabitants an opportunity of showing their attach-

ment to the vanquished in a manner that deserved to be recorded and honoured by the Senate; for we are told by Livy that four thousand legionaries, mostly wounded, and in a complete state of destitution, were hospitably received by the Canusians; and that a rich matron, named Busa, not only gave shelter to a large portion of them in her house, but furnished them with raiment, food, and the necessary provisions for the continuance of their journey.

A verse of Horace, "Verba foris malis, Canusini more bilinguis," has induced many antiquaries to suppose that the Greek language had continued in use together with the Latin in this city as late as that poet's time.

After the destruction of the Roman empire by the barbarians who occupied all this portion of Italy, Canosa fell under the dominion of the Saracens for the space of about forty years, that is, from 827 to 867, when they were driven away by the Emperor Louis II. The vestiges of its ancient edifices present little to attract the traveller's attention: the outline of an amphitheatre, the traces of walls in the direction of the river, the remains of a gate and an aque-

duct, and a large edifice designated as the abode of the benevolent Busa, constitute all that exists above ground; but the subterranean structures for the purpose of sepulture present an ample and interesting field to the researches of the artist and antiquary, not only in the peculiarities of their form, but in the number of fictile vases of the most exquisite workmanship which they have usually contained.

One of these sepulchres, opened in the year 1813, inclosed the skeleton of a warrior in complete armour of brass, gilt, and elaborately worked, with his sword by his side, and surrounded by numerous vases of various dimensions, some of which measured eight palms in height, and four in their widest diameter, exhibiting the largest specimens of that kind of article ever discovered.

The political vicissitudes to which the kingdom and its capital were shortly after that period subjected, caused the dispersion of these singular and valuable relics; but an excellent model of the tomb and all its appendages is preserved in the museum of the Studii at

Naples, and gives a most correct idea of their beauty.

Since that, many sepulchres of similar construction, though not so magnificent in their details, have been found at Canosa; and one of these had been recently excavated at the time of my visit, and amply fulfilled my expectations, though already despoiled of all the objects it contained. These were, a large chest full of vases of exquisite taste and workmanship, and several terra-cotta figures nearly the size of nature, chiefly representing weeping females; many other fictile utensils of a coarser kind were likewise found: but the tomb itself, notwithstanding the spoliation it had suffered, was well worthy of notice, having been cut in the mass of tufa with an exactness in its proportions, and a minuteness and sharpness in its details, that baffle all description.

The discovery of this sepulchre having been accidentally effected by perforating the outward coat of stone cut into an arch, in digging for a cellar, this aperture now serves to give access by means of a ladder; but the original entrance was a doorway, to which a flight of

steps, now choked with earth, led from above. The first division is of an oblong form, with a recess on either side; and a second door, facing that of ingress, admits to an inner room, on which much more labour has been bestowed, especially in the upper part or vault, which is carved so as to represent with extraordinary similitude wooden rafters closely joined together, rising in a gentle slope from the lateral walls to a transversal beam that runs along the whole length. This inner division is entirely covered with a very fine stucco; and a window, in a red frame, is painted on each side of the door of entrance.

From Canosa I made an excursion across the country to a spot little known beyond such portions of the surrounding territory as enjoy its aspect, which, on account of its peculiarity of form and position, are not few. This was Castel del Monte, an edifice said to have been raised by the Emperor Frederick II. as a sporting residence; and which, though entirely abandoned very shortly after the extinction of his dynasty, and given up to solitude and neglect ever since, has suffered less from the ravages

of time than from the depredation of man. There is no existing record to ascertain the exact date of its construction; but from the elaborateness of the work, and the expense which must have been lavished upon it, it may not unreasonably be referred to the early and most flourishing part of his reign.

Besides a palace near Manfredonia, and the castle of Lago Pesole, already mentioned, which, from its mountainous situation, was peculiarly adapted to a summer abode, this prince had formed several other establishments for the purpose of hunting and hawking, in the milder regions of Apulia, which he frequented in the winter months: among these are reckoned a residence near Minervino, another at Gravina, and this last in the vicinity of Andria, a town where his third and last wife, Isabella of England, daughter of King John, died in childbed.

The road from Canosa to this place is for some distance the same which leads to Andria, and is called finished, that is, its width and direction are traced, and it is furnished with a thick stratum of broken stones, which,

in a country so unfrequented by carriages or even carts, it will require some years to convert to a beaten track; but, on leaving the road to Andria to follow a straighter and more direct southern course, it becomes one of those paths which the convenience or habit of the natives have marked at will, over the stony flats that stretch from the Adriatic westwards.

On quitting the vineyards, which extend some way beyond Canosa, the range is wild, and little diversified by cultivation, though occasionally intersected by inclosures of dry stone walls round scanty clumps of stunted oaks, the wretched appearance of which seems to stamp the soil as totally unfavourable to the growth of timber, though tradition says that it once was covered with thick forests. We saw but few farm-houses; but these were usually large, well built, and abundantly supplied with magazines for grain, sheds for cattle, outhouses and barns; and apparently in a flourishing condition, as far as one could judge from the number of persons employed on the premises, and the abundance of poultry and cattle feeding within their circuit.

These occasionally relieved the tediousness of a road which soon became so rough and stony as to preclude all progress beyond a foot's pace, so that we were nearly five hours in reaching the object of our research; which, though very early accessible to our sight, seemed from this very circumstance to mock our impatience, and to recede as we advanced. It was not unsatisfactory to meet several persons, apparently of the higher class, travelling on horseback, alone and unarmed; an unusual sight to us, who had so recently quitted the province of Basilicata.

At last we reached the base of the pyramidical hill on which the castle stands, in a stony wilderness, but commanding beyond this unfruitful belt a fine view, towards the sea, of the line marked by the towns of Barletta, Andria, Trani, Bisceglia, &c.

From a distance the building has the appearance of a square castle with a tower at each corner; but, on a nearer approach, it assumes a more interesting form, and strikes the beholder with no small degree of surprise, by exposing four turrets at once within the scope

of vision, being in fact octagonal, and exhibiting great ingenuity in the architectural peculiarities observed to adhere strictly to this form, which stamp the edifice with a remarkable character of symmetrical regularity.

The path leading from the flat up to the castle was too steep and rough to admit any approximation but on foot, and we thus gained the only entrance it possesses, which is a Gothic arch surmounted by a frieze and pediment, in what is usually termed the Grecian style, supported by two pilasters with Corinthian capitals, each resting on a recumbent lion in high relief. The material used in this portal, which is the same as that of the ornamental parts of the lower or ground-floor, is a breccia, probably from Mount Garganus, of mottled red and white, so coarse in its surface as to offer the appearance of a mosaic embedded in an ochre-coloured composition, but at a little distance the effect is rich.

The inner court is, like all the rest, octagonal; and the space left between each of the eight towers, below as well as above, is allotted to one room, every one of which, exactly similar

in all the sixteen, is singular enough in its form: the inner walls, which correspond with the court, being considerably shorter in their extension than the exterior ones, which face the open country; no part of the room therefore being rectangular.

In every corner of the lower rooms is a semi-column of the same substance as the portal, furnished with a base and a somewhat grotesque capital, from which spring the arches that form the ceiling, traced by a rib or moulding of finely cut stone from the upper extremity of each column to the centre or key of the vault, where they meet, and are united by a large rose of highly relieved foliage. The upper rooms, which, as has before been observed, are exactly of the same form and size as the lower, differ only in the pilasters that support the arches, which are here formed of three slight columns surmounted with a capital composed of palm-leaves, very much in the style of those of the Alhambra. These, as well as the ribs of the arches and all the other ornamental appendages, are of a very fine white marble, as well as a ledge projecting

from the walls in every room, along the whole of each side, probably used as a seat. The door frames are of the spotted breccia above-mentioned, as well as the facing of two narrow oblong niches, placed on each side of the chimney in the rooms which are provided with one: these in number are four, the alternate ones having none, but a window instead, looking into the court-yard, and situated exactly opposite that which opens in the exterior walls; so that the rooms without chimneys have two apertures for light, and the others only one each. These are very small, and so high as to be reached by four marble steps in the thickness of the wall; therefore, by no means adequate to furnish sufficient light to such spacious apartments. The form and ornaments of these windows are of the most florid Gothic taste, like some in our most admired sacred edifices of the middle ages: they are divided in three small arches, supported by carved pillars, ornamented with sculpture and fretwork of great delicacy.

The channel for the smoke is but little indented in the walls, but furnished with a qua-

drilateral cap or case in its whole length, tapering upwards like a funnel, and resting on the piers on each side of the hearth. These coverings were formerly adorned with marble slabs richly worked in various designs; all which have been carried away, together with the squares which formed the pavement.

The Abbate Troyli, who, in the year 1749, published a general and detailed history of the kingdom of Naples, has given a minute and tolerably correct description of this building; and says that the lateral walls were incrusted with marble as high as the capitals of the pillars, and that the ceilings were embellished by mosaic. In either of these surmises it is difficult to agree with him, as the stones on the surface of the walls are so shaped in their divisions as to exhibit a design of considerable lightness and effect, which would not have been executed had it been destined to receive a coating of other materials; and the same may be observed on the upper vault. He is also of opinion that an iron railing or balcony ran all round the interior court; which is possible, as the windows that look to it are not raised

from the floor like the opposite ones, and have not even a stone balustrade.

Four of the turrets were furnished with spiral flights of steps, lighted by loop-holes at regular distances, leading first to the upper floor, and lastly to the terraced roof: two of these staircases are still entire, and give admission into the apartments by small doors in the angles.

The four other towers have each a closet with a cupola roof, the proportions of which are of singular elegance: these occupy the whole interior circumference of the tower, and, like it, are of octangular shape, communicating with the large rooms by a door. The space in the tower above these recesses, which might have served for guards or attendants, was, in each of the four, adapted to the use of a dovecote; and the portion beneath served as a cistern, supplied with rain-water by marble channels from the roof. This last, to which the upper extremities of the spiral stairs give access, consists of a terrace composed of large flat stone slabs closely connected and dovetailed, and rising from the inner and outward walls in a gentle slope up to a line covered

with a strong curb-stone, and extending round the whole edifice. This allows the rain to run off on either side into stone gullies, and from these, interiorly, into a capacious vaulted cistern occupying the whole of the inner court, and, exteriorly, into stone pipes that communicate with the smaller reservoirs in the towers, the summits of which have a circular aperture or mouth, to allow the water to be drawn up to the very top of the castle, through a corresponding tube of masonry. The four apertures for the chimneys on the roof are exactly of the same shape as these for the water, and placed at equal distances from them, only near the inner range of walls, which is not provided with a parapet similar to that on the exterior side.

The court has, besides the portal, three doors giving access to the lower suite of rooms, which served probably for stables, kitchen, and other domestic uses: over one of these is placed a mutilated statue of black marble, whicl has the appearance of being antique.

On the face of the interior wall, in one of the upper courses of the stones, is inserted a

large marble bas-relief, which, though much injured by time and weather, and not easily examined from the roof opposite, appeared to me not only antique, but of most exquisite design and execution: it contains many figures, one of which is recumbent, and, as far as I could judge, represents a sacrifice.

These are the only two objects that are not in perfect harmony with the rest of the edifice; which exhibits in all its parts such an unity of design and workmanship, that I cannot agree with Pratilli, who, in his "Via Appia," supposes that it might have originally been a sepulchral monument, converted into a fortress by the Greeks of the Lower Empire, the Lombards, or the Saracens.

The symmetrical regularity displayed in the plan of this singular fabric, however complicated it may appear in the inefficient description I have ventured to give of it, must be my apology with the reader for so long detaining his attention on what he may consider uninteresting details, however forcibly they may strike an immediate spectator, who can scarcely observe the exquisite finish of the

masonry without assimilating it to many of the most celebrated remains in Greece and Asia.

These feelings of admiration are united with sensations of a very different nature when he considers the state of total abandonment and neglect to which this structure is reduced in the present times; as there is not even a rail or bar to the gateway to prevent at least the entrance of cattle, who use the lower division as a place of shelter in bad weather, while the upper part is accessible to every species of outrage and spoliation.

It belongs to the Duke of Andria, who possesses a considerable estate round it; and during our investigation of the spot, limited as it was to a very short space of time, from the necessity of returning to Canosa before night, we encountered a large party of inhabitants of the town of Andria, who had come to see it, and very hospitably invited us to partake of a rural dinner at a neighbouring masseria, belonging to one of them. It was not possible to accept this invitation, from the reasons above-mentioned; which I regretted, as much on account of the friendly unaffected manner in which it

was proffered, as from a feeling of curiosity to find oneself suddenly established on the footing of an intimate acquaintance with a considerable number of individuals whom one had never before seen, and whom it was impossible ever to meet again.

We returned to Canosa that evening, and quitted it the following morning, October 16; taking the high road to Foggia, which I reached the same day at four. A bridge crosses the Ofanto about two miles from Canosa, the stream forming here the boundary between Capitanata and Terra di Bari: a few masses of considerable size, but indistinct form, are seen on each side of the river, and indicate that the ancient city was prolonged thus far. Among these, a brick arch, probably once incrusted with marble, and a square structure of stones, are the most conspicuous. The Ofanto still wore its summer appearance, that of a secondary stream deficient either in copiousness or depth; but the breadth of its course, and the level to which it has worn its bed below the general surface of the soil, bespeak the changes to which it is subject in the winter

season. These might also be judged of by the height of the bridge, which is notwithstanding temporarily overflowed, and, consequently, at such times impassable.

Three miles below this, on the right bank, between Canosa and Barletta, is the celebrated field of Cannæ, the site of which is easily ascertained by the existence of the little river Vergella, mentioned by Florus and Valerius Maximus, and by other local coincidences. A few fallen heaps of masonry also remain, denoting the situation of a small town, which, in the early ages of Christianity, retained sufficient importance to become an episcopal see, though now entirely annihilated.

The town of Cerignola, probably the ancient Cerannilia, is well built, and apparently flourishing. It is surrounded by brick and tile kilns, and situated about six miles to the south-west of Canosa, on the high road that runs from the capital to Barletta, after traversing Foggia. It contains about nine thousand inhabitants, and its environs show isolated houses and farm-houses surrounded by trees and cultivation; much of this ground having been converted to

that use within the last eleven years, when I had first visited the spot.

Before crossing the beds of the rivers Carapella and Cervaro, the former dry, but the other graced with a clear and rapid but scanty stream, we stopped to bait at a tavern called Passo d'Orta, near the village of Orta, once the site of one of those overgrown religious establishments founded by the Jesuits, of frequent occurrence in this kingdom.

One of the tracks exclusively allotted to the transit from, and to, the provinces of Abruzzo, called *Tratture*, runs parallel with the road for some distance; and we saw several herds of black sheep, guarded by snow-white dogs, slowly plodding southwards on their autumnal emigration.

The caper plant grows wild here in great luxuriance, but totally unattended to. I endeavoured to obtain a few, aware of the difficulty of raising them from seed; but was deterred from my purpose by the thickness of the root, and the extreme depth it had acquired, which rendered this operation, without suitable instruments, totally impracticable.

The city of Foggia, the second in the kingdom in point of population and opulence, appeared to me much improved since my last visit, in 1818, which it owes to the care and capacity of the Intendente, Cavalier N. St. Angelo, who, during his administration, had exerted himself to render it, in every respect, worthy of the rank it is entitled to.

Three carriage roads have been opened, to as many portions of Mount Garganus: one by Manfredonia to Monte Sant' Angelo, the principal town of this district; another to S. Giovanni in Rotondo; and a third by San Nicandro to Vico, nearly touching the sea-shore behind the mountain: thereby establishing an easy communication between these places and the capital of the province, and the means of exporting the various articles of produce and traffick furnished by those interesting regions.

The city itself is indebted likewise to this gentleman's indefatigable exertions for many institutions, which must secure to him the gratitude of its natives: among these, a capacious *campo santo*, or public cemetery, out of the precincts of the town, a new prison on an

improved plan, an inclosed promenade, and a theatre, are the most remarkable. This last, whose dimensions are suited to the population of Foggia, estimated at twenty-nine thousand, appeared to me the most complete work of the kind in its plan and execution that I ever saw. Notwithstanding all these improvements, which it would be unjust to underrate, the city of Foggia labours under local and physical disadvantages which must preclude its ever obtaining an exterior aspect of importance, and still less of beauty.

The extreme flatness of its position, sunk in a kind of bowl beneath the surrounding level ground; the meanness and want of regularity of the buildings, which are scattered along every approach to it, so as to render it difficult to ascertain where the town begins; the want of water, and the deficiency of trees, or vegetation of any kind, beyond turf in the winter, and a few languishing vineyards in the summer, must prove insurmountable obstacles to all that can flatter the eye. The interior however offers good houses, well-paved streets,

and well-furnished shops; but there is not a decent inn.

From Foggia I resumed my way towards the capital by the high post-road; the first stage, called Pozzo d'Albero, being one of those solitary stations the peculiar desolateness of which can in all Italy be only exemplified in this province and the Campagna di Roma.

The driver of the post-horses I had taken by no means kept to the high road, but cut across it in all directions when any chance of abridging the distance offered itself, following paths used by carts or cattle, and sometimes none at all; which, after dry weather, in a country so flat and devoid of cultivation, is not only perfectly practicable, but frequently preferable to the main track, the original materials of which, after many years' construction, are not yet consolidated into a smooth surface, from the circumstances above-mentioned. After the first stage, where we exchanged indifferent horses for others that could scarcely drag the carriage, and a postilion whose looks proclaimed him more fit for an hospital than the saddle, the

country becomes studded with the stunted pear-trees peculiar to Capitanata, which in some places assume the form of thickets; the face of the soil becomes more undulated, and the sides of the road gradually rise into hills. After leaving the town of Troja six miles to our right, and that of Lucera, twelve miles behind it, we entered the Val di Bovino, a defile between two wild banks of no great steepness, watered by the Cervaro, the ancient Cerbalus, a stream which issues from this pass, and crosses the whole of Capitanata in a diagonal line, to discharge itself into the salt lakes between Manfredonia and Barletta.

This glen was for many years regarded by travellers, and celebrated throughout the realm, as a spot always infested by brigands; but its terrors have considerably abated by the judicious establishment and disposition of a brigade of gendarmeria, in various stations, along the whole extension of the valley, which terminates at the foot of a hill, where a single post-house, called from its position Ponte di Bovino, is placed.

The episcopal town, which bears the same

name, stands perched on a high mountain to the left bearing the appearance of a desolate village, though said to contain four thousand inhabitants: a seemingly impracticable road leads to it; and it gives the title of Duke to one of the four illustrious Spanish families that settled in the kingdom with the Aragonese dynasty, that of Guevara. This, and that of Avolos, (Marquesses of Vasto and Pescara,) have survived the extinction of the two others, Cavaniglia and Cardines, and are ranked among the largest landed proprietors in the kingdom.

From the stage next to Foggia, the breed of post-horses, or rather their powers, seemed to retrograde; and about a mile beyond Ponte di Bovino, those we had taken there, refused, or were inadequate, to draw my little carriage up the ascent which continues the whole way to the next station, called Savignano; so that we were obliged to have them changed.

This acclivity, along the same defile and stream, is more tedious than steep; but the scenery on either side, enlivened by woods and cultivation, forms an agreeable relief to the dull flats of Capitanata.

Savignano is a single house, so called from a large village standing above it; while another, named Greci, is placed exactly in a similar position on the other side of the road. Here, again, we were furnished with such wretched animals by way of horses, that, on their stopping short, after half an hour's progress, we sent back, as we had done before, for others which could but just draw us along, and that so slowly, and with such repeated halting to give them breath, that we arrived at Ariano only half an hour before dark.

The postboy, who seemed as distressed as his beasts, let us into the secret of this deficiency; which is, that, the posts being farmed from government by a contractor, this speculator, in his turn, appoints to the different stations such individuals as postmasters, as will undertake to maintain the number of horses prescribed by the authorities, at the lowest possible cost. The paucity of travellers is such, that only the number of horses sufficing to the service of the mail, which passes at regular days and hours, is adequately fed to sustain this task; while all the rest are absolute-

ly starved, and have not the physical powers to drag a vehicle up a hill. The truth of this explanation was proved at Ariano, which being in another province, (that of Principato Ultra, entered a few miles west of Savignano,) and subject to the jurisdiction of a less rapacious contractor, produced horses fully equal to their labours.

Nothing can be more wearing than the road from Savignano to this last town, following, as it does, a continued zigzag and very steep course the whole of the way to reach the peak of the mountain on which it is perched; a situation which gives it the advantage of being visible to the whole surrounding country, and a temperature of singular rigidity in the winter.

The town of Ariano contains eleven thousand souls, and is an episcopal see: it is, moreover, the head (*capoluogo*) of a considerable district; which circumstance, for no other reason can exist, must have been taken into consideration when the high road was carried through it at considerable expense and labour, without a shadow of reason.

The immediate environs, however, are far

from ugly, cultivated as they are, diversified by woods and ravines clothed with vegetation, and commanding, as may be supposed, extensive views in every direction. That portion of the town through which the road is conducted, for there is a higher division also, has but a mean aspect, from the smallness and lowness of the houses; but I can venture to affirm, that I never beheld in this, or any part of Europe, so many beautiful female faces within so limited a space of time and distance as greeted my sight in the streets of Ariano. There was not one that could be termed ordinary; while the majority combined every requisite of feature, expression, and complexion that can constitute superior beauty.

The inn at the post seemed above mediocrity; but the number of vetturino carriages which had stopped there for the night, being the second resting-place from the capital, induced me to avail myself of the remaining half-hour of daylight, the good quality of the horses, and the continued descent in the road, to push on as far as our old quarters at Grotta Minarda, which we reached, and where we were hospi-

tably received by our former host and his family, shortly after sunset.

From thence we resumed our way, the following morning, towards the capital, by Avellino, the road of which I have given an account at the beginning of this excursion, and which it would therefore be needless to repeat.

THE END.

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